

THE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

WIRE



ISSUE 172 • JUNE 98 • £2.80 / US\$6.50

P-funk
for beginners

Richie Hawtin
Plastikman-machine

**JOHN
MARTYN**

THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH

***Sun City
Girls***
tricky kids

***Jesus &
Mary
Chain's***
jukebox

Gary Lucas

Ikue Mori

Don Byron

Cut Chemist

**Eno's
Music For
Airports**



subterranean

PRESENTS:

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Long awaited album following current single 'Type Zero' and releases for Skam. Highly individual future music in the tradition of APHEX, ZIQ, VIBERT. Mixes all forms of electronica, Drum 'n' Bass, Electro & all points.



V/A 'DUBNDLOGY PRESENTS DARGUE FONQUE 2' (MIDDLE EARTH)

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Includes exclusives / rarities from DEPTH CHARGE, DUB PISTOLS, FUTURECORE, WITCHMAN ZULUTRINK, SILVERKICK, Q BURNS ABSTRACT MESSAGE etc.



PLURAMON BANDITS' PLATEAU

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POLE 'RAUM' (DIN)

Follow up to the NME Single of the Week 'Tanzan'. Stefan Betke is also chief engineer at the BASIC CHANNEL / CHAIN REACTION studio in Berlin.

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Essential Beats & Breakz compilation of exclusive tracks from the cream of the top scoring producers on the scene, featuring JEEP BEAT COLLECTIVE, LAIDBACK, MEAT KATIE, PUSH SQUAD and SURREAL MADRID.



V/A 'SELECTOR DUB NARCOTIC' (K)

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LONGSTONE 'SUR-ROUNDED BY GLASS' (OCHRE)

"Clipped beats, samples & edits, fused together to form a kind of glacial funk which transforms into heavier beats and deep feedback drones." - THE WIRE



E-Z ROLLERS 'WEEKEND WORLD' (MOVING SHADOW)

For weekday living or that weekend world, the propulsive breakbeats, megabass grooves and lullaby vocals of 'Weekend World' mark this album out as a future classic. "18 tracks and everyone a monster" 10/10 - DJ 'Sutem drum & bass' - The Face "The Drum & Bass artist album is back" 4/5 - Mixmag



BILL LASWELL 'OSCILLATIONS 2: ADVANCED DRUM AND BASS' (SUB ROSA)

Hot on the heels of Laswell's Miles Davis reworkings, a rich range of flavours, diversity & complexity; blasting, dark drum 'n' bass, breakbeat, downbeat and soundtracks. "Drum 'n' Bass meets John Barry" - NME

BRYDN GYSIN 'ONE NIGHT @ THE 1001' (SUB ROSA)

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V/A 'DJ SS presents: JAZZ & BASS SESSION II' (NEW IDENTITY)

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of Barcelona

18. 19. 20.

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18. Thursday

LIVES: Kraftwerk, Coldcut, Pae Sans, Porter Ricks, Hoppoly, Digi Dots, Sigmat, Slean, Tito & Saguru Goto, Azores Concert, Zili Tanes, Ambar

DJ'S: Frankie Kerakou, Dj Hell, Digs & Woonch D.I.Y. d/y, Dj Madlen, Irini, T.I.K., Mouse Down, Chelvi, Dj G.Z., Blesno, Dj Greas, Dave Tardila, Dj D.Sus, En Red D d/y, Irini

GLDIAL TEXNO / RADIO FG introduces: Ivan Snaghe, Anard Redolens, Impulsions, iCube & Grl-b

19. Friday

LIVES: Axa BS, Laurent Garreci, Joy Jay Johanson, Les Rythmes Digitales, Sargoon+Nick Harris, Fawcett Manual, Matsun Encolage

DJ'S: Deep Dash, Jack de Marsella, Ralph Lawson, Purple Heliguy, Jordi Grau, Punks, Audio Pollution, Mika Varro, Xpansio, Dj Grievie-Ul, Marc Moch, Nino

SUBLIME introduces: Dj Wada, Max Brownson, Co-Fusion, Susume Yokota / Prism, Dj Yama

COSMOS introduces: Funk Empire, Uppo + Professor Angel Dust, Koomen + Montemar

20. Saturday

LIVES: Ami Benor's Teatralada, Le Car, Neil Landman+Tobias Schmidt, Artur, Sabonad, Moll Men, Neotropic, ACC Concert, Dbruz, M.A.S.A.

DJ'S: Jeff Milla, Surgeon, Jay Dierkes, Frontis 50, The Marshall Trio, Charlie Hill, Dots Steel & The Lovestones, Dj Zero, Dj KJler, Janier Sanchez, Aquilari 61, Frank Muller, Siderat, Felipe Volamun, Bernardo Exaltat, Dj Magic, Dj Wain, Neil 9000, Elnika, Oscar Broch

Catgry / POPDAMI introduces: Mouse on Mum, Club off Chant, Aelra, Mollvent & Dr Water, Whirlpool Productions, Martinis Schell, Juller, Michael Mayer

MINICOLLE introduces: Tera Marcano + Dj Angel Molina, Peli Diques + Dj Mayle, Dj Ouel Amale, Catlens, An Der Dj, Jose Ornel

PERMANENT ACTIVITIES: Multimedia Installations, Guided Exhibitions, SonarCinema, Conferences & Debates, Record Company and Publisher's Fair, Technological Fair, Sonar On Line, Internet Club, CD-Rom Music and Video à la carte, Technological Demos

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editor's idea

"I you understood everything I said, you'd be me" The line comes, as so often, from Miles Davis, spurted at this instance as a dropped response to all those smart-ass music critics and ill-informed jazz fans with their maggot-brained attempts to get to grips with Miles's music.

Apart from telling us all we need to know about Miles's attitude to those members of the human race who weren't Miles, the quote should be tattooed onto the forehead of every musician who ever dares to issue their music for public consumption, and subsequently comes into contact with a music critic in interview mode.

Miles's unanswerable one-liner came to mind while reading Howard Mandel's interview with Don Byron which appears on page 22 of this month's issue. On his new album *No Bopplotation*, Don's attitude towards the music press, or more specifically, America's jazz critics is laid bare during a skit which takes the form of a mock interview session in which Don responds with contempt to a hopelessly uninformed jouno who, naturally, fails to understand everything he says. Don came close to replaying the skit for real during his interview with Howard, approaching the conversation on the counter-attack, convinced he was about to be faced with another interrogator who would ask all the wrong questions, misunderstand and misrepresent his work, fail to grasp the impulses and intentions behind it, kill it stone dead by covering it up with inappropriate labels.

Perhaps Don's prickly attitude is tied in with the complex relationship that has existed in America since at least the 1950s between the predominantly white, male jazz critic and audience, and the predominantly black, male jazz musician (or maybe he's just paranoid). But it is symptomatic of another phenomenon I'm not talking here about critics and fans getting hold of the wrong end of the stick when it comes to discussions of musicians and their music, but the fact that since the year dot musicians have been failing to understand the processes by which their music is analysed and consumed by people who aren't them.

Miles Davis aside, musicians of all persuasions appear to be bound by at least two common denominators, on the one hand, they confuse their opinions with the facts (actually, Miles did this, too) which is another story

altogether, and more to the current point, they think that because they know all there is to know about their own music, everyone else should, too.

Certain musicians of my acquaintance, who in other areas of life give the impression of being well-rounded human beings with a reasonable perspective on the world, suddenly metamorphose into teeth-spitting bigots when confronted with responses to their music from critics and fans alike who don't get it.

Often they have a point, of course. From Leonard Feather to Steven Wells, jazz bores to indie snobs, critics and fans can lag so far behind the music, they are attempting to engage with that it's embarrassing. But it truly be told, in such cases it is more likely to be the musicians who don't get it.

"An album is a mood," said singer Dinah Shore during a recent TV request for Frankie Sinatra, in which Frankie was credited, by Vic Damone no less, with the invention of the concept album. It was a striking remark for a singer so embedded in the never-never land of American showbiz, and one that applies as much to Thrilling Gristle as Old Blue Eyes. Musicians set the mood, and they expect everyone else to fall right in behind them, which is where it all goes pear-shaped. In come the critics and the fans, with their doty opinions and their starchy eyes, like bulls in a china shop, stomping all over the music's serious purpose, picking it up, turning it over, shoe-horning it into critical flights of fancy, turning it into an accessory for repugnant lifestyles and crackpot personal philosophies, leaving it to warp on radiators at house parties, relegating it to background ambience at dinner gatherings, and fling it under obvious categories. It isn't malicious, mostly, and we all do it. Including musicians, as it happens.

To put it bluntly, if musicians don't want their work to be misrepresented, subjected to wild leaps of the imagination, appropriated for uses far removed from the original intention, then they shouldn't let other people get their hands on it. As Louise Gray writes in this month's On Location, concluding her review of Bang On A Can's Starzard airport performance of Brian Enos's *Music For Airports*: "In the ears and the imagination of the listener, music is always rewritten and personalised." And there ain't a damn thing musicians can do about it. **TONY HERRINGTON**

The July issue of *The Wire*: on sale Tuesday 30 June

The Wire on the Web

For music news, hot links, feature archive, label contacts and back issue database, go to:

www.dfuse.com/the-wire

soundings

Selected highlights of the month's live events, happenings, club spaces and broadcasts

Festivals/Special Events



Broadcast at Midtown

66:Midtown 96 John Peel curates this year's South Bank festival of new music and performance (20 June–5 July). Opening with a Warp Records showcase (*Lovecore* Prod. Broadcast and Phone: 20 June 9:45pm) the series continues with a Chemical Underground label night (21 9:45pm), a Cornershop and Gorillaz/Zigzaggy Mylo double bill (30, 10pm) with much more continuing into July including Spiritualized, Culture: Suicide, Silver Apples and Extreme Noise Terror (Details in next month's Soundings or check the Midtown Website at www.southbank.org.uk). London South Bank Centre provides venues, times and prices call 0171 960 4242 for full details.

Resonance 167.3FM In tandem with Midtown London Musicians' Collective is launching a month-long 24-hour radio art station broadcasting within Central London (9 June–5 July). Answering to a compendium and historical overview of experimental and creative radio art, and with many specially commissioned DJ sets and virtual magazine shows, the highlights include three broadcast time transmissions from US media terrorists Negativland live from San Francisco, a 24-hour 'Soturn Day' dedicated to Sun Ra, outdoor performances featuring renowned international radio artists Gregory Whitehead and Christy Hogue, and the radio premiere of John Zorns 'Track Hour'. Classic broadcasts scheduled include works by Antonin Arnod, John Cage and Kenneth Patchen, Orson Welles' *Derek Jarmen* and Glenn Gould. For a full schedule call the UKC on 0171 403 1932 or pick up a brochure at London's South Bank Centre.

Interference Jointly curated by The Wire and London Electronic Arts, this month's forum is devoted to the music of Harry Partch as well as screenings of *Windong* and *Music Studio*, two rare short films from the Endicore One series, the night includes screenings of *Harry Partch Society* and a performance by instrument builder/musician Frank Perry, who continues Partch's legacy. London Lux Centre, 2–4 Hoxton Square, N1. 17 June 8:30pm. £6/£3. info 0171 494 1340/blooming 0171 694 0201

Astral Plane Festival New-psych special headlined by Tokyo's Acid Mother's Temple. And The Melting Pot/Rafael Ochoa – the group led by Musica Transonic guitarist Makoto Kawahara. Other acts include The Peebles, Richard Youngs, 36 Snowfall and National Park. Glasgow School of Art, Renfrew Street 24 June, 7:30pm. info 0141 353 4500. Acid Mothers also land in London supported by The Psychedelic Head Experience. Upstairs at the Garage, 75 June, 7:30pm, 0171 607 1818

Sonar 98 For three days, Barcelona hosts this International Festival of Advanced Music and Multimedia Arts, becoming the digital interface of global Electronics, the Internet, multimedia art and industry. Among many DJs from Spain, Europe, America and Japan, he highlights include Kraftwerk, Porter Ricks, the reformed Pan Sonic, Jeff Mills, Laurent Garnier, Jim Tenor, Max Bannister, Mouse On Mars, Mothership Dr Walker, Fergus Keown, Alex BB, Deep Dish, Les Rythmes Digitales, Purple Penguin, Super Experimental Studio, Surgeon, Gokul, DJ Vadim, Claude Young, Teen Marconis, Whirpool Productions, Tio + Saguro, Goto Signal, Formas Plurales, Cristian Beyer, Al Resonante, David D, Wade Co-Fusion, Phefux, Francisco Lopez, Neotropic, Fredric Galfonso, Susana Yokota and others. Barcelona CCB, day and night. For information visit www.sonar98.com or booking contact via e-mail: suarez@sonar98.com or check the Website at www.sonar98.com. UK travel agent: Aventura Doors are handling travel and tickets. info 0171 240 5252

Texasco New York Jazz Festival New York's Knitting Factory hosts a two-week festival in the city covering award and mainstream jazz, opening with concerts by Joseph Bowie Big Band (10pm) and Lester Bowie's Brass Field (midnight) on 1 June. Other highlights include William Hooker Quartet (2pm), Yusef Lateef Duo (13, 7:30pm), Cecil Taylor (14, 10pm), Jon Spencer Blues Explosion (15, 8pm), John Zorns Big

Kokth (11, 7:30pm), Henry Threadgill (12, 8pm) and Ravi Shankar (14, 8pm). Various times, prices and venues. For info contact the Knitting Factory on 01 213 219 3006

I Rip You, You Rip Me Rotterdam goes Detroit rock over three weeks, creating gallery space and cinema to a celebration of The Stooges. The M.C.s and Destroy All Monsters. It includes video material, photography and back-up documentation as well as a special concert by Destroy All Monsters with UK's Scanner at Nighttown (12 June). This odd couple also participate in visual art workshops (10–11 June). Detroit rocks Rotterdam between 5–28 June. info 00 31 1 0478 3492

Moving On 98 Belfast music festival spanning jazz, World Improv and Electronics – all at once in the case of Evan Parker and Lawrence Casserley (24 June). The programme includes Han Bennink's *Closure* Trio (20), Techno duo B12 (21), Luxembourg's *Survival* (23), Brian Irvine Ensemble (25), Bhanga Night (26), El Retiro Latino (27) and a Rhythms of Cuba workshop (28). Belfast Crockett Arts Centre. Incept: B12. Lineup (1): 20–28 June. Imprints vary, info 01232 643753

Stoke Newington Midsummer Festival. Valentin Kalle Matthews installs her musical living room at 32 Stoke Newington Church St. N16, from dawn to dusk for free on 14 June. Other events include composer Max Richter's Sensing a sound, video and light installation at St Mary's New Church, Stoke Newington Church St. 17 June. 8pm. £3.50 £2.01B 356 5358. Finally, Edges perform poems by Stockhausen and Gokulak at the Rosemary Barn, 2 Sheepshead Road N1 18 June. 8pm. £5/£3. 0171 704 6665

Overused Silence Three days of audio-visual debauches – visual sound installations and live electronics – of scientific premises in sound, loading with a radioactive scanning performance from Danjazz (10pm). Also taking part are Turbidity Systems (12, 11:30), Barry Nichols, London Hole, Octave Rattazzi and GNV. London Junction 242 Coachbarrow Road SW9 24–26 June. 4pm. Day live events 6–9pm. 0171 738 4000

On Stage

Barry Adamson & rare live three day residency by the sound-art specialist. London Empor'um. 62 Kingsly St. W1. 7–9 June. £10
Gavin Bryars Premiere of the composer's new opera *Conductor Dies & Experiment*, directed by acclaimed Canadian film maker Aram

Epigon, with counter-tenor David James of The Hilliard Ensemble. London English National Opera Coliseum. Covent Garden WC1 15 20 24 30 June. 0171 632 8300

Don Byron & Existential Dred The clarinetist tours his Nu Bop/avant-garde project, opening at Leeds Irish Centre (10 June) Manchester. Band On The Wall (11) London. Barbican Centre, with New York (12), Birmingham (14, 13)

John Cage Tribute to the master: featuring piano and chamber music performed by various Sargis recording artists. London Union Chapel, Compton Avenue, N1. 5 June. 8pm. £6/£4. 0171 226 1686

Teeny Cadillac Two night return, engagement for the jazz folk singer. London Jazz Cafe, 30 June. 10pm. £4.00/£4.00/£4.00

Corneilus & Boles Celebrated Japanese exponent of experimental kitsch sets up camp in the UK. Support from Amsterdam sampling member Elizabeth Esselink. Also. London Eve Club, Ragdoll Street. W1. 1 June. 8pm. £7.01 71 734 4252

Corrado Consonni Double bass recital featuring contemporary works by Berio, Xenakis and Stravinsky. London Gower Hall. Red Lion Square. WC1. 10 June. 7:30pm. £6/£4. 0171 242 8030

Flaming June Four evenings of improv and free jazz. Steve Beresford, Alan Tomlinson, Simon Rose, Simon Fell and Mark Sanders (11 June), Harry Beckwith, Chris Beccio, Gail Brand, Marco Mattos and Tony Hanch (12), Paul Dunnall, Mark Sanders, John Edwards and Evan Parker (13), Phil Merritt, John Bacher and Roger Turner (17). London Club Orange. Fitz. & Fink. 240 Great Portland Street. W1. 8:30pm. £4/£3

ISO Improv and terror/surrealism featuring Japan's finest Onuma Yoshihide plus guests. London St. Peter's 109 Commercial St. E1. 3 June. 8pm. £8/£6. 0171 392 9032

Kadwark Worldbeat. What's confirmed to be their last... but no UK dates confirmed as yet. Tokyo Akasaka Blitz (June 3), San Francisco Warfield Theatre (7), Los Angeles Palladium (8), Chicago Riviera Theatre (10), Detroit State Theatre (11), New York Hammerstein Ballroom (13), Washington DC Free Betel Festival (14), Barcelona Sonar (18 – see above), Denmark Roskilde Festival (25) – John Martyn. This month's cover star plays a warm-up gig at London Mayfield (2 June, 7:30pm) before appearing at the Reach Festival. Finsbury Park. 6 June. Details on 0181 961 5490

letters

Write to: Letters, *The Wire*, 45-46 Poland Street, London W1V 3DF, or fax 0171 287 4767, or e-mail the_wire@ukonline.co.uk Please include a full name and address. Every letter published wins a FREE CD

Sinewave submission

An indispensable part of the genre of Letters to the Editor seems to be a recital of one's qualifications as a longstanding reader. In contrast to these pikers who write in to you boasting of their patronage of two years, three years, whatever, I've been following your magazine for so long that my faithful readership way back when was assured in spite of (or maybe because of) the presence of Michael Jackson's visage on your cover (*The Wire* BB).

In early 1994 I relocated from the US to Poland, at which point, in order to stay informed of developments in the outside world, I subscribed to *The Source*, *Vibe*, *Cadence*, *Details*, *The Village Voice* and *The Wire*, and picked up the occasional *Momoy*, *Face* and *Aren't* that came my way. It is to the great credit of you and your colleagues that, unlike more than half of the aforementioned your magazine has remained essential reading for me (despite your failing to have followed my suggestion to run a replica of *Wire's* 154 album on your cover in honour of your 154th issue, and despite your having run only one piece by Chuck Eddy in the last five years).

This letter is prompted by two matters. First, I liked this month's Editor's Idea (*The Wire* 171) so much that (perhaps as a separate of great minds thinking alike) I am sending herewith as an e-mail file my own contribution to the most recent issue of Frank Kogart's fanzine, *Why Music Sucks* (for which, from one or, great reader to another, thanks. Ed). Secondly, I was likewise so impressed by Mark Sinker's piece on Robert Moog in the same issue that I feel compelled to offer a quotation I happened upon just one week ago when re-reading Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying Of Lot 49* for the first time in 22 years. I think that it is not only nicely supplements Mr Sinker's article, but provides the reader with an interesting perspective as to what the world looked like in 1965, when Pynchon wrote the bulk of the novel. To wit:

"A sudden chorus of whoops and yibbles burst from a kind of jukebox at the far end of the room. Everybody got talking. The bartender yipped back, with the drinks. What's happening?" Oedipa whispered.

That's by Stockhausen," the hip graybeard informed her, "the early crowd tends to dig your Radio Cologne sound. Later on we really swing. We're the only bar in the area, you know, that has a strictly electronic music policy. Come on around Saturdays, starting midnight we have our Sinewave Session, that's a live get-together folks come in just to jam from all over the state, San Jose, Santa Barbara, San Diego."

"Live?" Metzger said, "electronic music, live?"

"They put it on the tape, here, live, lolle. We got a whole back room full of your audio oscillators, guitarbot machines, contact mikes, everything man. That's for if you didn't bring your ax, see, but you got the feeling, and you want to swing with the rest of the cats, there's always something available."

John Wojtowicz Vienna

For art's sake

Although I generally disapprove of commenting on other readers' comments, I was so astonished at what Alan Haselden wrote about "pointless and redundant portraits/graphics" (*Letters, The Wire* 170) I just had to speak in favour of the magazine.

The portraits and graphics he writes about are indeed typical of every issue of *The Wire*, thank God, plus art editor Robin Hawes and the whole "image crew". Not only are they essential. I think they are essential to get this message of 'adventures in music' across. Look at the exquisitely designed articles about the Berlin scene (*The Wire* 169), *Neurofunk* (166), *Ansuman Bhawas* (165), *Yusef Lateef* (164) and many more. Those articles were created out of the same stuff that the music was made of. *The Wire* would not be the same without them. While other music mags only dabble in wordplay to hold their readers' attention, *The Wire* shapes well-wrought texts, enigmatic graphics and evocative pictures into musical explorations that are pleasing to the eye as well as to the mind (inviting readers to listen and investigate).

Perhaps being an artist as well as a musician myself, I am so much of an aesthete. I do think, however, that most readers would reject Haselden's idea of their favourite music mag only "pointing out good records and interesting events." I measured this, the Tony Conrad article (170), thank you very, very much, could have done with half the space - don't you dare!

Sybilla Poortman, An Houtum, The Netherlands

Cut the crap

The question that has been bothering me since I started subscribing to *The Wire* is this: why do I find it so readable when much of the music you discuss is difficult to like? I think your Editor's Idea (*The Wire* 170) finally solved my problem. From now I love to read about music. Fact two: nearly all the other UK music magazines are crap. The last time I bought *Q* and *Vox* (two or three years ago) I just couldn't read them — it was like they were written in a foreign language that I

wasn't snide or sarcastic enough to understand. The reason I enjoy *The Wire* and *Record Collector* is that, although coming from very different perspectives, the writers on both magazines display genuine enthusiasm for the music they cover, the kind of enthusiasm that is more usually found in the world of the fanzine. There's nothing so-faced about this — let AME and the rest pissake themselves out of business.

I think the *Primer* should be elevated from occasional to monthly. There are a lot of artists I need to be primed about — the two that spring to mind right now are Ornette Coleman and Ground Zero. But even a *Primer* on an artist I am familiar with can be fascinating. Your piece on Beefheart was excellent. Although a seasoned Beefheart fan, I still regard myself as a beginner — listening to his records, there's always something new to pick up on. Incidentally, *Record Collector* ran a similar piece the same month. Maybe this was coincidental, but I have the awful feeling that the obtuseness are sharpening their pencils. Beefheart is not a well man.

Rick Round Tokyo, Japan

Faith healing

Three cheers for the great editorial in the April issue (*The Wire* 170). I swear, it almost put my faith back in the music press. Keep up the great work!

Dave Lang via e-mail

Ugly beauties

I enjoyed reading the Captain Beefheart *Primer* (*The Wire* 170). Mike Barnes's comparison of some of the guitar lines on *Trout Mask Replica* to Hubert Sumlin and Robert Johnson reminded me of the obvious influence of Robert Pete Williams on the Captain. If I had to describe Beefheart to a curious blues fan, I would say that he sounds like Howling Wolf singing over an electrified Williams, with drums.

Listen to Beefheart's version of Williams's "Grown So Ugly" on *Salt As Milk*; then listen to Williams's version. Beefheart didn't have to change much. Williams has produced some amazing raw angular music that fans of *Trout Mask* should check out. He's like some terrifying monstrous cousin of Joseph Spence.

Paul Samolin Los Angeles, USA

Dead space

I am as ecstatic as ever with most of your subject matter, but must comment that your recent choice of



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letters

Primers has seemed less inspired than usual. I love all kinds of psychedelic music but found The Grateful Dead article (The Wire 166) slightly unnecessary and, although I love Beefheart to distraction, both these artists get ample coverage in more mainstream publications and that space could have been given to lesser-known groups — how about a garage-psych Primer with people like 13th Floor Elevators, Electric Prunes, The Monks, etc., or a Krautrock-psych Primer? Or headbanging white roses? Why not a bizarre electroacoustic-concrete Primer on pieces like Konrakte, Williams Mix or La Reine Verte?

One more minor whinge. Please state when music is available on vinyl as well, when humanly possible, as I've noticed a few omissions. Other than that, my subscription money is possibly the best spent of the whole year, and where else can you get frameable pictures of WS Burroughs and other obscure artists?

Greg Delysid Higman South Harrow

About that electroacoustic-concrete Primer: it's coming soon, so stay tuned — Ed

Far East offence

First off I'd like to mention that I am a faithful reader of your magazine. I find your articles and reviews very helpful to my acquiring of new music. But something kind of mead mead which I read in one of your In Brief reviews (Soundcheck, The Wire 170). It was the review of Jansen/Barbieri/Takemura. In this review, you completely discredit the groundbreaking music that Japan made in the late 70s/early 80s by comparing it mindlessly to Eno's *Another Green World*. I don't think this is fair one bit. I love Eno but I don't think David Sylvian and Japan's other musicians sought out to copy Eno's trademark alienness. Japan have shown their clearly uninhibited progression from *Adolescent Sex* to *Ten Drum*, musically and thematically. It really isn't fair to slag off a well-respected band such as Japan just for someone's lack of knowledge.

Jamie Guggino Silver Spring, Maryland

Yes, we have no bananas

I have just read Mike Barnes's review of the Electronic event featuring David Vorhaus/EAR at London Spitz (On Location, The Wire 170) and feel that the reviewer has been somewhat too kind.

David Vorhaus did indeed cut "an avuncular figure on stage" (the kind of uncle with an extremely out of date sense of music; his set comprised what sounded like the incidental music from BBC TV shows like *Mommy Vice* or *Knight Rider*). To add insult to injury, the track "Black Noise" with its unimaginative Hitler sample was introduced in a jocular manner in an OTT German accent that shows not so much that "his intention is to wound fascist believers" but instead that he hadn't given a single thought to contextualising the sample. A significant number of the crowd was booing, and one critical genius even threw a banana at him before his

hasty stage exit (unfortunately it missed and hit the mic stand). The review made no mention of this. I am tired of reading bland flatteries in The Wire — let's have some critical banishes thrown for a change.

Mat Holotov London

Shell shock

If it weren't so laughable, Jonathan Romney's ridiculous and misguided review might lead some to believe he actually had something to say about Tortoise and their new record *TNT* (Soundcheck, The Wire 168). For a group who began with the most unselfconscious of reasons, it's curious that Romney accepts all the critical baggage that's been heaped on them. Although it's provided a good laugh for the group — for presumptuous critics who are prone to hearsay — it does a disservice to attentive music listeners.

TNT is certainly the best Tortoise record yet. What's "oppressive," "limited" and "pointless" is all the critics who are putting their pens before their ears.

Wayland H Iverson Chicago, USA

Phuture shock

I just finished reading the interesting piece on Phuture and the Chicago Acid "UK"-scene (The Wire 170). Only one question crops up: Mike Shallicross writes about a new Phuture 303 album called *Alpha And Omega* to be released "later in the year". In my hands I hold a CD by Phuture 303 entitled *Alpha And Omega* released in 1996 (!) on the Hamburg label Container Records, distributed at the time by Metronome Records. So, who's right, what's wrong?

Tom Holert via e-mail

Nothing wrong, they are the same record. "Later in the year" referred to the first-time UK release of *Alpha And Omega* — Ed

Keep on trucking

Thank you for Louise Gray's Royal Trux article (The Wire 171). Of the slew of articles about the band recently, it was the most insightful and articulate, a fascinating and tantalisingly brief look into their opaque world. Great to read a piece which discussed their music for a change. My only possible complaint would be: give us more!

Fergadell via fax

Ear opener

I really just discovered The Wire about seven issues ago when I picked up the Vienna Tones issue (The Wire 162) and basically read it cover to cover. I have purchased every issue since. Your magazine has helped me discover many very interesting musicians. Unfortunately, there are so many that I often (basically always) can't afford to hear them, but even so, as someone very interested in music, I get to hear various people describe what they do and their ideas are

very exciting. I must give you an overdue thanks for the article on Jim O'Rourke (The Wire 165), which I have read probably three times, as well as many others, including the fine one on Mark Hollis (The Wire 167). The magazine is a library of information and the finest I know of at the moment. Thank you very much.

Nathan Bush Chico California, USA

Return of a Durutti Columnist

Until recently I had never read The Wire. I had always been aware of its existence, if only peripherally, but I imagined that it was a jazz mag for hardcore avant-gardists only.

In the last couple of years I have rediscovered a taste for more leftfield music, promoted particularly by the work of Sabres Of Paradise, LFO, Leftfield themselves, a great deal of which is used as the soundtrack for much contemporary dance — another enthusiasm of mine.

I have always had a passion for music, from early Brian Jones-era Stones through the Velvets and onwards, onwards and onwards, including such diverse sounds as Bowie, Eno, Nizki, 70s soul, early rap, Romy Music, La Düsseldorf and Joy Division. I had an early involvement with The Durutti Column as vocalist on the *Factory Sampler* EP and then Vini Reilly and I experimented for a while and did a couple of gigs, just the two of us — Vini weaving impossible shapes and shades with his guitar and WEM Copycat while I recited and chanted and ranted — all as warm up to *Slaughter And The Dogs* or some such!

Your magazine has revealed to me a fertile world of intelligent music that is still being created and has set me off on a rediscovery of music. The digital delights of Electronica, the abstractions of post-rock, avant whatever (especially the beauty of Labrador and Tortoise), the lazy sensuality of Trip-hop and Ambient, funk and so on.

I'm now a subscriber to your wonderful magazine and will like to thank you for the re-introduction.

Colin Sharp Newcastle

Verve's unfinished business

Re Erik Gemtzen's letter (The Wire 169). Verve aren't reclaiming jazz material. We're just putting it under one heading so that it can be handled by jazz departments around the world, rather than ending up in inappropriate pop release schedules. At least, we're getting the music out there.

Richard Cook Verve Records, London

Corrections

Issue 171: The picture of Pulsinger and Tunsikan in Soundcheck should have been credited to Eva Vermann. Slapp Happy's *Go Ku* album is distributed by 3MU/Pinnacle, not Sony as stated in *Fast Track*. Issue 170: The picture of Porter Ricks in the track-by-track guide to The Wire Tappet CD should have been credited to Frank Bauer.



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Roman Stolyar

Odessa

An exuberant sun is shining when a group of around 20 musicians from all over Europe arrive at the airport in the Ukrainian city of Odessa. They are met by Kamelia Tespikierko, artistic director of the Two Days And Two Nights Of New Music festival, as well as members of the festival's organising Renaissance Foundation. There is no money for culture in Ukraine, and both the festival, which is now in its fourth year, and the Renaissance Foundation are funded by the American Soros Foundation — that didn't stop Odessa's recently re-elected Mayor Hurvitz making a little political capital from the event, however, claiming in one brochure all the credit for its existence.

All of which only adds to the festival's importance: In one of the major cities of the former Soviet Union, these two days and nights represent the only chance for its citizens to witness world class performances of composers working at the sharp end of 20th century classical music. The official festival reception takes place at the local conservatory the next morning. The once grand, though now dilapidated building still breathes a lively

atmosphere. Here there will be masterclasses and workshops in the three days preceding the festival, so that the students have a chance to come into contact with musicians and composers from Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The workshops attract many students, yet are slightly disappointing. German composer Ernst-Helmuth Flammer gives a dense lecture on the extent to which Bruckner and Mahler point forward to 20th century music. The interpreter recites the Russian translation in a monotone, while the students take notes half-heartedly, or sneak out altogether. After this, the workshop of Dutch pianist Kees Wieringa is a relief. He is working on a fiercely difficult repetitive piece, and the students crowd round the two pianos. Yet Wieringa notes that only one student has actually practised the score he sent them months in advance. Seemingly, the students have an enormous craving for new music, but expect to master the techniques by merely listening intently. "People in the East have still not learnt to take responsibility," says Russian composer Alexander Roddikhov by way of explanation. "During the Soviet regime the state thought for them. This not only explains their lax attitude, but also the fact that they don't dare complain when somebody gives a shitty masterclass."

On Friday afternoon, at 4pm, the festival proper bursts loose. The Ukrainian Marine Orchestra opens with Frédéric Roussel's *Coming Together*. Could it be more symbolic? The venue usually serves time as a nightclub, and has a capacity of around 900. The stage stretches out into the hall, and is surrounded by tables and chairs. The club is packed with a very mixed crowd: not the specialised, "intellectual" audiences typical of avant garde classical recitals in the West, but a healthy mix of old and young people who are curious about new music.

The programme is varied and carefully composed. Each day it opens with a soloist, followed by a duo, then a trio or quartet, after which larger ensembles play. A large spectrum of 20th century composition is covered. Great and sudden intervals characterise the performance of Elliott Carter's constructivist *Canon For Three* (saxophones). Kazakhstan composer Rachid Kallimullin adopts a lyric-expressionist tone in his solo-for-violin *A Singer's Monologue*, during which performer Rustam Abasov has to put his head through a noose, and smoke a cigarette. Trombonist Banno Webb performs Giacinto Scuderi's meditative *Three Pieces*, which ordies a single tone, and Presto by Vinio Globokar, for which Webb reneges a tube from the trombone and moves through the audience playing titles. The sensual soundworld of Luciano Berio's *Sequenza III* for accordion is placed next to the neo-Romantic tonal music of Graciela Agudelo's *Confluencia* for cello and viola da gamba. Martin Bresnick's string quartet betrays Minimalist influences, while elements of rock music can be traced in the pulsating rhythms of Dutch composer Jacob ter Veldhuis and Serbian composer Roman Stolyar's improvisation for recorder and tape. The drone underlying *Trials* for violin and two cellos by Romanian composer Dora Căpăciaru

points to influences from folk music; and during George Benjamin's *Voix Viola*, Paul Silverthorne and Andry Vitych switch from fierce dissonance to intensely lyrical passages.

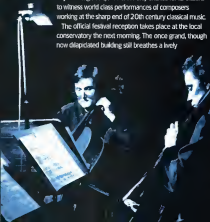
The atmosphere is relaxed and informal; it is by no means an insult to the performers if you have a chat with your neighbour. The bar remains open during concerts, and the audience sits in the dark while the performers are lit by coloured spotlights. Narrative pieces, especially if presented theatrically, are cheered enthusiastically, while the more austere works draw meagre applause. In Odessa, live classical music has yet to become a codified experience, so the audience reacts straight from the heart. As Paul Silverthorne puts it: "You have to go out and grab their attention. If you play without inspiration for one second, you lose them."

The climax of the festival is the French saxophone quartet Kasax, who present stirring music by composers such as François Rosati and Ernest H. Papier. During Papier's *Axe A* Quartet the foursome executes their prescribed dance steps with such alacrity that the audience goes berserk and demands several encores. In the hands of Kasax, even Schoenberg swings. The level of all the performers, from both East and West, is strikingly high. But Eastern composers are slightly under-represented, supplied with just 20 out of the 80 compositions performed. Even so, they leave their mark, particularly Ukrainian composer Alexander Krasov's splendidly nervous string quartet *Consequences*. Simeone Osatozo by the Romanian Corneli Tarazu, in which a gesticulating clarinet is bedded in evocative rustling chords drawn from the strings of a piano. Ukrainian composer Vadim Larchuk's piece for cello and viola da gamba, performed by his own group, The Frescos; and the mysterious and dramatic *Beyond The White Boundary* by the Ukrainian Ludmila Samodava. "For us it is important the festival brings music from the West, so we can define our position," Samodava maintains. "Anyway, the share of music from the East is already larger than in the previous editions."

Integration takes time, after all, and this festival is doing the best it can — and getting results: when the last note is sounded at five o'clock on Sunday morning, the hall is still packed with people. They'll have to survive for a whole year on what the festival presents in live New Music. An inaccessible thought for spoiled Westerners.

The critic Ute Klotz puts the festival's impact into perspective: "By being confronted with new music and musicians from the West, slowly but inevitably a new way of thinking will seep into people's consciousness. We will gradually learn to be more aware of our own responsibilities towards life. This is of immense importance to bring about changes in our politically and socially totally corrupted and mafia-controlled country. Eventually we will become a civilised nation."

And through their contact with Odessa's rap audiences, Western performers and composers may find a way back to what music is all about: emotion and vitality. **TINA DENNIS**

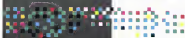


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Cut Chemist

Old school lessons

It's hard to think of anyone in HipHop having as much fun as LA's Cut Chemist. Turntablism may well be the most rigorous of HipHop's disciplines, but Cut Chemist imbues everything he does with levity and the infectious excitement of discovery. Like the *Sesame Street* collages of Kid Koala, his records and performances recall both the Old School and the primary school. That's not to say he doesn't pour some serious science into his records — just that they sound like the work of someone who is happier fooling around with a toy chemistry set than trying to reinvent the wheels of steel.

The erstwhile Lucas McFarlane first came to attention as the DJ with LA HipHop crew Unity Committee, who released the "Unified Rebellion" 12" in 1993 in conjunction with Rebels Of Rhythm. The record's highlight was the Old School throwdown of Cut Chemist's "Lesson 4" (it later appeared on the San Francisco Bomb label's trailblazing *Return Of The DJ Volume One* compilation). Jigsawing together radio station idents and snippets of Indeeep, Harlem Underground Band, Bob James, Dan Aykroyd and Spoonie Gee, "Lesson 4" was a tribute to both Double Dee & Steinski's pioneering cut 'n' paste records "Lessons 1, 2 And 3", and to the days when HipHop was about the simple pleasures of finding a new sound and growing to it.

After "Unified Rebellion", he formed Jurassic 5 with Nummak, Chak Zha, Zaxxi, Aki and Mark Twain, whose brilliant self-titled EP has just been released in Europe. Like "Lesson 4", the Jurassic 5 EP recalls the joyous vibe of the first Sugar Hill and Envy releases. "I think from about 1992 HipHop went on this tangent and strayed away from what I thought it was, or what I really loved about it," diagnoses Cut Chemist. "We're all using Jurassic 5 as a vehicle to get back on that page where people don't have to worry about dying for rhyming. It's not about money, it's about coming up with some funky shit. Bottom line, I think a lot of that thinking roots back to that era of the early 80s when all of it was fresh and new to people. It's almost like redefining that era for now."

The Jurassic 5 EP also contains "Lesson 6" — no marks for guessing it's Cut Chemist's stunning follow up to "Lesson 4" — which sounds like Magnus Pike caught in a breakfast tape loop. "Lesson 6" was like me zipping straight from the past and into the future and doing what no one else is doing," he boasts, "which is using rhythms in HipHop that no one would think of using. Usually when people find a break they want a common time [he imitates a 4/4 drumbeat]. I was like, Let me take a 6/8 shuffle and put it in a song because I don't think anyone's going to do that. I was sick of everyone taking the same samples as me, so I was



Cut Chemist (front right) with Jurassic 5

saying, All right, the only way I can be safe is take something that no one in their right mind would use. That was a few years ago and it actually took me two years to put the song together, just adding to it when I had free time."

The track might sound off the cuff, but it is the result of a painstaking trial-and-error procedure. "Every time I have to think of a sample to put with another sample, I have to file through 10,000 records in my brain," Chemist comments. "Does that one work? Is it in key? Is it in harmony? Is it in the same time? There are all these different elements that a sample needs to fit with and after one and 99.99 per cent of the time it's just luck. You sit there and play the track and you play the record, and if it goes, it goes. I'll tell you 70 per cent of the time it doesn't. Then there's the preparation part, just sitting down and saying, All right, I've got to start working on this. That's probably the hardest part. I'm a big procrastinator."

For someone who claims to be a slacker, Cut Chemist gets through an awful lot of work. Aside from Jurassic 5, he has notably remixed DJ Shadow's "Number Song" and Liquid Liquid's "Cavern"; he is also responsible for the definitive turntablism document — *Live At The Future Perfect SoundSession*, with Shortkut from Inevitable Scratch

Pikz — and he's recently completed a degree in visual art at UCLA, where he got hooked to John Cage and Christian Marclay. About their work, he comments: "It's a way of re-interpreting things that people think they already know and presenting it in a whole new fashion, so people go, Whoa, maybe I don't know what the thing does or what it should do. There's no one function for anything, which is the state of mind for any b-boy: the turntable was originally designed to play records, but no, it's a percussion instrument. Stuff like that."

"I think Marclay and Cage definitely enhanced that way of thinking to a new level where I'm thinking, Wait a minute, maybe these guys are HipHop [laughs]. Me and Nammok have this routine where he'll take a rubber band and tie it to the stylus and pluck it. The needle is basically a pickup, so it'll pick up the vibration and you can play it like a bass or a guitar."

Cut Chemist also DJs with a salsa funk group called Cozmatti, where he cuts beats and trades licks with the guitarist. "There are DJs in rockabilly bands now," he laughs. "HipHop is like a plague, it's taking over the world and every kind of music in it. I did some scratching on an alternative rock record by Less Than Jake. 'What's that about?' he says, concluding, 'You can't front on the DJ, we're here, and we're here to stay.' **PETER SHAPIRO** The Jurassic 5 EP is out now on Play It Again Sam through Vio!

Pat Thomas

Scatter the harmony

Pat Thomas is hard to place. One minute he's spinning a Butch Morris conduction with insistent Electronics, next he's sequencing drum 'n' bass for the John Peel show. Then he's DJ'ing versus the improvised guidance of Derek Bailey, or programming drums for an Asian funk troupe called Tones Of Life. Or he's playing keyboards for Chuck Berry at a French blues festival.

He was born in 1960 in Cowley, Oxford, eldest son of Samuel and Anita Thomas, who arrived from the West Indies in 1958 to work on the British Leyland assembly line and in nursing, respectively. His younger brothers Evan and Jamal play guitar and drums. As teenagers, inspired by seeing *Aswad* on TV, they'd jam reggae tunes at home. "*Aswad* were doing dub," Thomas recalls, "but we didn't know they had all these gadgets. Evan could play five-over-four so it sounded like an echo effect. Nobody told us that all you had to do was get an effects pedal. We were playing out of time — but in time."

Thomas thrived on piano lessons at school, and was adept by the age of 12. Seeing Oscar Peterson on TV inspired him to improvise. He was shocked to find that his training didn't help. He looked around for jazz gigs, so he could see how it was done. In 1979, Tony Oxley — the drummer who pioneered improv with Derek Bailey and Gavin Bryars in the legendary Joseph Holbrooke Trio in the 60s — was in Oxford.

"Amazingly fortunate," says Thomas. "I got to hear Peter Kowald, Peter Brötzmann, Paul Lovens, Howard Riley... all on my doorstep. That was great. The bad thing was I thought Tony Oxley's drumming was normal!" Closing one circle, Thomas is now a member of Oxley's current 15 piece group, alongside Matt Wand of Sooty, Hausen & Walkman.

In the early 80s, the Thomas brothers formed a free funk outfit called M4. Asked if he liked Rip Rig & Panic, he laughs and says no, mentioning that his low opinion of them "winds up." Steve Noble (sometime Panic drummer and current Thomas collaborator) "I read this incredible article in *Mojo* about Panic," relates Thomas. "When I heard them, it was a letdown. I was spilt. If you first regular gigs are seeing Tony Oxley play every two weeks, you get mega-critical. Seeing him changed my attitude towards the avant-garde."

Having experienced European improvisation at its creative peak, Thomas was unimpressed by the muted sounds of the 80s jazz revival, as well as its racial rhetoric. "I saw The Jazz Warriors and I just found it embarrassing," he

states. "It was weird, them knocking white players. I thought, oh dear, this is a real cheap shot. I knew for a fact that Courtney Pine and Steve Williamson had gone to workshops run by John Stevens."

Thomas credits anarcho-improvisor Steve Beresford for showing that radio scanning, drum machines, tape recorders and samplers had a place. "I was into reggae and funk. There was a Radio 3 session, and Steve's group Alterations had titles like 'Get Down Pt 6.' These guys are doing free improvisation, but they use James Brown titles! Beresford prevented the scene getting too rigid. If things like that hadn't happened, improvised music would have been accepted by the colleges. They could have defined it and said, yes it's post-Webster or post-Cage or whatever. With all these urban things coming in and out, this's never been possible."

Thomas has refused to commit to either 'jazz' or 'art-jazz' scenes. Instead, he developed a highly original take on musical history: jazz originated in Islamic Spain, not Africa, it harbours a concept of harmony as well as rhythm (hence harmonolides, credited by Thomas to pianist Thelonious Monk), the East German Marxist musical historian Ernest Borneman is a better authority than the "politically correct" Gunther Schuller. Blues free jazz, free improvisation, 12 tone, microtones, ethnic chromatics, all revive a legacy of music, making driven underground by the tyranny of 4/4 rhythms and the tempered scale.

Thomas's own contribution remains elusive: it's still being worked out. *gg* to *gg*. Mercurial and subtly disorientating, a new album, *Remembering*, is described as "Webster meets Jungle". One of his most satisfying releases is a duet with saxophonist Lol Gwili — *One Night In Glasgow* (Scatter) — stuffed with sardonic glimpses of jazz history. For him the lesson of the Butch Morris tour was the solidarity of the UK musicians involved (one result is a new quartet with Ophry Robinson, Simon Fell and Mark Sanders).

"You work out that the real nitty gritty comes through playing with people, not by having some fantastic concept," contends Thomas. "Improvisation is difficult music, but anything that's worthwhile is like that. That's what I think is disturbing about New Labour, the Minister of Fun saying if you do anything outside the mainstream it's 'leisr'. That concept of working class culture is poisonous."

Thomas's group Scatter features ex-Fall guitarist Dave Tucker, Phil Minton's vocals and Roger Turner's macro-percussion. "The reason I called it Scatter was the idea of dispersal, working on multiple levels, but also because when you play heavy improvisation, people do scatter. It doesn't pull any punches."

BEN WATSON Remembering is released this month on NUC (through Harmonia Mundi)

label lore

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Goran Bregovic

Balkan scores and wars

"I was born in Yugoslavia, a kind of Frankenstein country, composed of pieces which really didn't fit together very well," remarks film composer Goran Bregovic, who — most famously — scored the religious slaughter of the Isabelle Adjani movie *La Reine Margot*. "The art there is also very Frankenstein-y. We are influenced by the Hungarians from the North, Bulgarians, Romanians, Greeks, Italians, who all have very strong music traditions. And we were under the Turks for 500 years. There's not much that is very original in Yugoslavian music."

Perhaps Yugoslav music really isn't very original — a debatable point — but Bregovic's true Balkan gift is his method of composing unified pieces out of a rubble of rock, brass, religious and classical musics. Bregovic compounds his soundtracks from dubiously tuned gypsy brass, rustic strings, orchestral swells, cosmopolitan guitars, voices and massed choruses. The pieces collected together on a new CD, *Edenitez*, are culled from films set in Yugoslavia and America (Emir Kusturica's *Time Of The Gypsies*, *Underground*, *Azraela Dream*) and France (Patrice Chéreau's *La Reine Margot*). Though the films span large leaps in time and space, Bregovic's movie album is of a piece, albeit after

the Balkan style of running together a riot of clashing styles and tones, all the time ringing some startling timbral mutations.

The composer came to international film scoring through a very Balkan route: "I was born in the middle of this eclectic everything," Bregovic replies, "so my method of writing is very eclectic. . . . The eclecticism was lost with the breakup." Born in Sarajevo in 1950 to mixed Serbo-Croat parents, he grew up in one of Yugoslavia's several outward-looking and extraordinarily well-informed capitals, where he founded the million-selling rock group White Button in 1966. "I was a huge star in the communist period," relates Bregovic, in the sardonic, matter-of-fact voice of someone who got disillusioned with success long before it gave out on him. "In the communist time rock 'n' roll was more important for the youth there than it was here. In a way," he contends, "because it was maybe the only alternative system of values you could present and not finish in jail."

Discouraged by a 90 per cent tax rate, he spent the latter part of White Button's career in semi-retirement on an island off the Yugoslav coast. Having survived communism and punk — "Punk was interesting up to 'God Save The Queen,' when punks discovered tuning machines," he remarks — he finally succumbed to the pleas of his director friend Emir Kusturica to soundtrack his forthcoming film *Time Of The Gypsies*.

"At the time of White Button I had a lot of film propositions," he smiles, "but you know rock 'n' roll stars, there was not enough money and not enough glory in making music for the movies. So I did *Time Of The Gypsies* for Emir out of friendship. He had problems with the budget, so I did it for free, even paying for the

studio time. We worked together again on *Azraela Dream*, when the war in Yugoslavia started. We were in Paris at the time, and the four of us in Emir's crew stayed there."

Soundtrack work had eased Bregovic out of the tedium of post-rockstar drudgery, and going into exile meant he had to forfeit his White Button riches and property. Now in his forties, he found himself starting out all over again. "Actually" was once more a debutante, which was not at all bad feeling; at least it was nice at the beginning," he admits. "I was in a bit of a panic, let's say, so the first few years of the war. I did, like, ten movies, because I was panicked for the money. So I worked like crazy. I did ads for margarine, oil, perfumes, anything I could get. Now I am slowing down and not doing that much moves."

The international acclaim of Kusturica's *Gypsies* brought Bregovic's music to the attention of Isabelle Adjani, who commissioned soundtracks for the poor *Toxic Affair*, the compensation being a chance to work with Scott Walker on two songs, and the far more impressive drama *La Reine Margot*. His score exemplified his Balkan method of achieving emotional accuracy with seemingly inappropriate, clashing components. He wrote Catholic Latin singing parts into an Eastern Orthodox framework, thereby counterpointing the onscreen Catholic slaughter of the Protestants with his opposite, a musically utopian example of religious tolerance.

"It was one of the most expensive French movies ever done," he marvels, "so the directors must have been insisting on me, because with those kinds of budgets the producers don't usually take a risk on savages like me. They prefer people with minimum guarantees, like those Americans who make low notes on the suspense, high love notes on the violence at the end. But I think the director [Patrice Chéreau] felt I could be motivated by the story, because its story of 16th century France, when the Catholics killed all the Protestants, which is the story of my country today."

The success of his scores and the opportunities they opened up for him to tour his Weddings And Funerals Orchestra have undoubtedly cushioned the curse of exile. What with the gypsy brass, the Bulgarian singers, the male choir, does he carry the emotional baggage of the Balkans with him everywhere?

"Of course," he responds. "You always love your country. If you are lucky, you are born in America and love America. If you are not lucky you are born in Yugoslavia and must love Yugoslavia."

"Let us compare sardines and salmon," he concludes. "It's nice to be a sardine, you are swimming in nice company in the ocean, beautiful. But if you are a salmon you are born in one small stream and then some day you have to go back there, just because there is some madness in your head telling you to, so you go back. That is your destiny if you are born somewhere like Yugoslavia. It is not comfortable to love a country like this, but you can't choose, it is just something you are born with." **BIRA KOPF** Ederlezo is available now on Mercury (through PolyGram)



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Thomas Dimuzio

Sound contortionist

Thomas Dimuzio has always been strong in the face of diversity. He started off playing keyboard, guitar and drums in a series of rock-orientated (as in Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, King Crimson) groups, while a fascination with sound led to early experiments with a double cassette deck. But it wasn't until he acquired the Electro-Harmonix and its 16 second delay — a "digital *musique concrète* machine" — that he became more

interested in working with sound as a medium. "I realised that box made anything into music through the sheer process of repetition," marvels the San Francisco-based Dimuzio. The only problems were it couldn't save loops. Sampler technology provided the final component for Dimuzio's "custom sonic environments".

The space that Dimuzio has been vining with exceptional results lies somewhere between noise, *musique concrète* and Improv. Take the opening of his debut LP *Headlock* (originally released in 1990 but just reissued by ReR Megacorp), where sheets of sound bluster across each other to form warping, abstract, expressionist time tunnels.

A glance at the credits on Dimuzio's albums reveals an incongruous amalgam of instruments, materials and processes. On last year's double CD *Sonicism*, the list included a 19" oscillating fan, feedback, resonating water pipe, broken MIDI interface, shrinkwrap machine, freight trains, bees, black flies and AM radio, along with various guitars, analogue synthesizers and digital samplers. "Each artist has their own approach to noise," reflects Dimuzio. "He integrates elements of harsh noise but does not rely on it as a main source of inspiration." He appreciates the viscerality of Merzbow, but John Cage provokes a much stronger response. "433" just tore off the doors. A credo screaming out that sound is music and music is sound," he enthuses. "Cage worked on the Williams Mix for months on end, cutting and splicing tape to measured lengths to complete a four minute piece. These days it's amazing to see digital technology at the point where music in the same spirit as *musique concrète* can be conceived and executed in real-time."

You might expect from these descriptions some kind

of interruptive cross-cutting of noise bites with blasts of distortion. But the result is far more auterist, and you can only guess at further depths of listening necessary to the integration of such glancing aleatory materials. The electronic Miles Davis of *Bitches Brew*, *Agharta* and *Don't Mugus* is one foundation stone. "Incredible music, dark and intense and flowing with life," Dimuzio raves. Another is Henry Cow (Dimuzio has collaborated with ex-Cow drummer Chris Cutler, who also runs the ReR label). "I think the juxtapositions and quick changes in some of my work are characteristic of Progressive music. Tonality in my music may be ambiguous, or even non-existent, but compositional structure and development are relatively close to Progressive in many respects — longer arrangements, theme and variations, odd metres, reprises."

The results are unpredictable yet constantly evocative, influences converge on the desire to "expose something new." Unlike much Ambient music, Dimuzio's work has an absorbing density. He literally makes sound symphonies out of the vibrations and velocities of the environment, listening then through musical explorations, turning the world outside in, so that it becomes an interior embryonic space. "For better or worse, the sounds of nature and technology have become so integrated in our lives that we may seldom notice or distinguish one from the other," he states. "I was recently in New York and was absolutely floored by the sounds of the city, especially 38 floors up midday in the centre of Manhattan. This kind of inspiration along with the desire to create new places, domains and experiences is at the heart of what I do." **MATT FYFICHE**
Headlock is available now through ReR Megacorp



track

GAVIN BRYARS tells Biba Kopf why he's reissued the original *Obscure recordings of Sinking Of The Titanic* and *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*

Cross question, but we have to ask: has this reissue been timed to catch the trickle-down effect from *Hollywood's Titanic*?

No, quite the reverse. In fact, Virgin have been trying to get it out for a long time. It was agreed with Philip Glass's Pont label that Virgin wouldn't re-release it until two or three years had elapsed since [the 90s versions of] *The Sinking Of The Titanic* and *Jesus Blood Never Failed Me Yet* came out on Pont. I doubt we'll make a killing on the back of the film.

Where does the public's continuing fascination with the disaster come from?

Well, it was such an apocalyptic event. It was like the 19th century ended with the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912 rather than in 1900. It was the end of a kind of

optimism, that industry and science and technology had conquered all fields, and man is master of everything. The *Titanic* disaster said, well hang on, maiden voyage and down you go. But from my point of view, it was the behaviour of the ship's orchestra which I found very moving.

Where did you get your facts?

Like most people of the late 60s, the film *A Night To Remember*, with Kenneth More, had as much impact then, frankly, as *Titanic* is having now. I read the book by Walter Lord, upon which the More film was based which carried much more detailed information, and that led me to the Board of Trade report into the disaster. I also talked with survivors. Of course there were more of them around back then [in 1969].

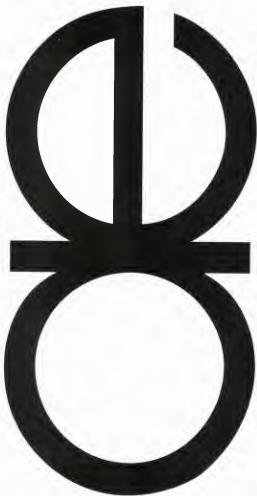
weren't you working on a theory about the group's sound surviving in the water after the ship went down?

Well, the surviving wireless operator called Harold Bride, described the last moments of the ship, about how the band were still playing as the ship went down. That made me think about them continuing to play while the water rose up over them. If the water had somehow contained the music, then it was perpetuated, because of the greater sound efficiency of water. Additionally, Marconi, who rushed to greet

Bride, had developed this idea towards the end of his life that sounds don't disappear. As they get older, they simply get fainter and fainter, and he was trying to develop the equipment to catch Christ speaking the Sermon on the Mount. Well, what with water being more efficient, you have got a better chance of recording the *Titanic*'s band. It's all a bit bawdy.

***Titanic* is coupled with *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* (featuring a loop of a tramp singing the title hymn). How do you think it reflects Britain now, with its increasing numbers of homeless?**

Well, in 1971 — when I made the piece, the homeless were almost a class apart. By the time of the 1993 version, the homeless are no longer a class apart, but you and I, when we lose our jobs and our homes are repossessed. It's a much more fragile situation. Frankly, if I had come across that tape in 1993, I probably wouldn't have made the piece. But the emotional response in 1993 was stronger, perhaps because of the conditions that existed around it. Here you have this old man close to death, homeless but exuding great dignity, which is the very opposite of what you expect of him. **□** The 1975 *Obscure versions of Sinking Of The Titanic* and *Jesus Blood* — one reissued this month on one CD through Virgin/EPI



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Scientific research has demonstrated that the chemical units comprising human DNA operate like extremely powerful molecular computers, coding and decoding information by performing complex calculations within the body. If you link this biological process to a computer, whose electronic calculations DNA precisely mirrors, these two parallel networks form a single cybernetic flow of information, theoretically effacing the boundary between organism and mechanism, and coalescing into the figure of the cyborg.

Treating her drum machines as a prosthetic extension of her own mental and physical processes, Ikuo Mori embodies just such a (wo)man-machine interface. On stage, barely visible above stacks of black boxes and their tangle of cables, she taps out a broadcast of pulsing textural helixes in bright stereo. In the flurry of coding and decoding passing between her mind, fingers and microchips, as she processes and patterns her beats and pulses, Mori and her machines merge as a single system, a biomechanical network of flesh and metal. But for Ikuo, the merging of mental and mechanical processes preceded the drum machines that facilitated the cyborg evolution. "Even back when I was playing a drum set, I was playing it like a drum machine," she recalls. "I would program the patterns in my brain and then repeat or change them in performance."

In a career stretching back more than 20 years, Ikuo Mori has raised the art of drum machine manipulation into a gripping, real-time, one-woman percussion discussion. Her music works to confound the typical criticism of electronics for their cold inhumanity, and to demystify and downplay the alleged impenetrable between physical passion and digital simulation. As she puts it: "I try to control the machines as spontaneously as possible, playing as close to my feelings as possible, as I would with any instrument."

Of course, for artists working in fields ranging from New Jack Swing to Neurofunk, diving true confusion from the new digital gear has been the perennial holy grail, the key problem of a physics of gesture, which posits a guttural ontological distinction between the physical space of acoustic instruments and the virtual space of electronics. "Well, I obviously don't sweat as much when I play drum machines," Mori remarks laconically. "But playing them, with all the effects and pedals, simply demands a different kind of physicality."

Ikuo Mori's first interfaces with artistic process occurred during her childhood in Japan. "My parents let me experience everything from calligraphy to ballet as a little child," she recalls, "though I'm not sure how much that influenced me, because when I was a teenager all I wanted to listen to was imported rock music." Migrating to New York City in 1977, she was immediately offered her chance to rock — albeit in an awkward, angular fashion — by Arto Lindsay. Together with organist Robin Crutchfield, they formed the No Wave trio DNA. As de facto frontmen, Lindsay seated upon the cheap Danelectro guitar he still brandishes today and Ikuo landed behind the drum kit. "Like many

bands that formed during the period, Arto, Robin and I were all touching our instruments for the first time," she recalls. "We were all self-taught, and just expressed ourselves in front of the audience." True to their name, DNA deconstructed and recoded rock as a sharp snarl-nose response to punk's rapid decline into beer-punk rock 'n' roll drabness. Their short, fierce contributions to Brian Eno's (infamously 1978) *No Wave* compilation *No New York*, which they shared with like spirits Mars, The Contortions and Teenage Jesus And The Jerks, display a group coming to terms with technical restriction, while reveling in the kinetic rawness of rock.

By the 1981 EP *A Taste Of DNA*, Crutchfield had been replaced by Cleveland triplet and ex-Pere Ubu bassist Tim Wright. "DNA became more of a rock band than an art band when Tim joined," Ikuo says. "At that point it really became something beyond." In the three years between *No New York* and *A Taste...* Ikuo's own playing had evolved from passionate fumble to brutal precision, transforming the group and its 90 second soundbites into a considerably heavier prospect. "Since we had been playing the same sets over and over for about three years, playing the songs approximated a ritual experience at its peak," she says.

By 1985, however, *No Wave* had deconstructed itself into dead-end irrelevance, and Ikuo began experimenting with new, relatively more complex means of production. "I got my first drum machine in BS and found programming to be such a joy," she remembers



Working the man/machine interface of drum programming, DNA to Death Ambient. Meanwhile, her artwork has helped

"But the switch didn't happen overnight; it took years to develop and finally become the set-up I use now."

At this stage Ikuo Mori was still orbiting the New York punk scene around clubs like CBGBs. A meeting with John Zorn exposed her music to different kinds of intensities. "John first introduced me to improvised music and other improvisers, and it opened up new ways of creating music," she says. Eventually, the vast possibilities of the bebop won out over the mundane physical requirements of drum chop maintenance. "For a while I was playing an acoustic drum kit and a drum machine simultaneously, but eventually the drum machine just took over. Its diversity makes composition easy, and ultimately that interested me much more than practicing drums." Mastering her new instrument at the same remarkable rate of progression she'd

shown on the acoustic drums, Ikuo burst into the forefront of the Zorn circle's growing notoriety in worldwide improvised and New Music communities, as she forged a reputation as a singular stylist and top-notch performer.

Like most of her downtown NYC cohorts, Ikuo cultivates the dialectic role of the composer-performer who embraces and exploits improvisational playing as a ground for a living, non-academic yet still "serious" music praxis. "To me technical virtuosity is much less important than sensibility and imagination," she asserts. "For me, improvisation has become both a tool for composition and a skill which expands my musical vocabulary." She's flouted that ever expanding vocabulary in numerous contexts, but most effectively on recordings with the vocalists Terika (Death Process), Robert Quine and Marc Ribot (Painted Desert), Fred Frith and Kate Hodge (Death Ambient), and on her superlative 1996 solo CD *Garden*.

Another consequence of Ikuo Mori's encounter with John Zorn was the development of a talent for graphic design she'd hitherto scarcely employed. When Zorn debuted his *Tzadik* imprint in 1995, the aesthetics behind the label's rapid-fire flow of releases were partially defined by Ikuo's sleek design tastes. She subsequently began designing the sleeves for releases on the Zorn-related Avant label, and her stunning high resolution imagery meshed into a multi-hued mosaic with sharp metallic typeface. Surprisingly, she reveals, "I was not seriously involved with [visual art until] I started designing the covers for *Tzadik* and *Avant*." Her graphic design gifts, like her musical talent, spring from a reservoir of raw, natural creativity. "Visual art and music integrate in my brain beautifully," she explains. "To me, the methods of composition in both areas are quite similar." Considering the traditionally integrated nature of Japanese aesthetics, aiming for a fluid, harmonic flux of image, sound, text and motion, it's no wonder Ikuo sees these organic affinities. It also accounts for her spending much of the 90s composing for film and video, most notably with the film maker

Abigail Childs, the results of which can be heard on two of Mori's *Tzadik* CDs, 1995's *Hex Kitchen* and the recent *B/Side*.

I wonder aloud to Ikuo about how few women there are in the world of improvised music. She dissent: "There are actually many female improvisers and musicians in the world, and more than a few women's festivals, there's just not as much written about it." Recent stellar duos with Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon, featuring Ikuo's sublime electronic ruck, clang and trill oblige against the strumming gale-clouds of Gordon's guitar, are a promising bid for increased visibility. Ikuo Mori herself adopts a supremely serene attitude to future possibilities. "There are so many elements of music, why restrict them?" B/Side is available now on *Tzadik* through Cargo



CYBORG MANIFESTO

Ikue Mori has provided the pulsebeat of New York's avant musics for two decades, from define the visual codes of the city's musical underworld. Words: AC Lee



Main image: detail from Ikue Mori's sleeve design for Dragon Blue's *Nodes Park*. Inset images, left to right: Mori's sleeve designs for Derek & The Dominos' *Solara*, Dying Ground's *Dying Ground* and her own *Hex Kitchen*



twenty four

Don Byron is one of the world's leading clarinetists — and one of its prickliest interviewees. Howard Mandel attempts to breach his formidable defensiveness to discuss Existential Dred, the versatile vehicle for his latest album *Nu Blaxploitation*. Photography: Skyn Kynaston

The trap was set... and I fell right into it. The fifth track of *Nu Blaxploitation*, Don Byron's new album, recorded with his group Existential Dred and released on the ur-jazz label Blue Note, is a spoof phone interview with the brilliant clarinetist conducted by a chirpy young woman from a smalltown American newspaper. Calling him "Mr. Byron", she tells him she hasn't heard any of his previous six records, but just knows he's brilliant. However, she has one question regarding the new album: "Why would you make something so horribly... *funkee*?"

The Art Ensemble Of Chicago's Lester Bowie pulled a similar trick on the late '60s album *Congloutin*, which sketched a comic encounter between the trumpeter and one Dave Ecksteinbergsten, of *Jazz* magazine. "Is jazz as we know it dead?" inquired Ecksteinbergsten earnestly. After a long and fantastic solo, Bowie sagely answers: "It depends what we know."

In trying to draw out Don Byron on the intentions behind *Nu Blaxploitation*, you inevitably echo one or the other of these faux jazz journalists — especially since the much acclaimed composer and reedist addresses every question like it's on affront to his right to define his art and be himself. I am moderately more informed than Byron's nemesis, one Ms. Mary Beth Shoemaker, and slightly less earnest than Mr. Ecksteinbergsten. But then isn't it the interviewer's task to ask "What's it all about?" — even if the answer is dead obvious, so long as it encourages the artist in question to speak out on the subject?

carat black

"I don't know what's bizarre about it," roosters Byron, responding to a comment about the styles of music covered on *Nu Blaxploitation* during a phone call to his home near Woodstock in upstate New York. "Unless you think it's weird I'm not making jazz records all the time." Oh, gee, here's a black man not playing avant garde! he mocks. "Well, I'm just not a free improvising kind of guy."

OK, point taken. But Little Ms. Smalltown Shoemaker got one thing right: *Nu Blaxploitation* is indeed funny. It is also political to the max, which might confound listeners who come to it via the elegant reversion of Bug Music — the Byron project devoted to the lesser known works of cartoon music composer Raymond Scott and Duke Ellington. *Nu Blaxploitation* might prove equally as confusing for anyone hearing it for the first time after the recent *No-Vibe Zone*, which showcases Byron's quartet at full blast live at New York's Knitting Factory, or his homages to '50s Klezmer bandleader Mickey Katz. That Byron has a biting social consciousness, however, is well known. It is evident in his liner notes to the Mickey Katz tribute album, and, indeed, the title of his debut album, 1992's *Tuskegee Experiments*, which refers to the US Army's social "testing" of the effects of syphilis on Alabama black men. And on 1995's *Misc For Six Musicians* Byron makes reference to African racial politics in such figures as H. Ross Perot, Shelby Steele, Rodney King and the Reverend Al. Sharpton. Perhaps none of this political talk means much to aficionados of the clarinet, for whom Byron is the boldest, most original exponent of the instrument to emerge in at least a decade. So they may wonder where their ace clarinetist has gone on *Nu Blaxploitation*.

Though the new album is big on backbeat and overwhelmed by verbiage, it is ostensibly short on reeds playing. The disc comprises a "Schizo Jam", featuring

rapper Biz Markie, two very faithful covers of songs by the '70s Latin-funk-rock group Mandrill, a revision of Jimi Hendrix's "If I Was 9", and two tracks featuring Byron's own "Domino Piece" stories about being cased, if not discriminated against, due to his race. It also includes his settings for poems by frequent collaborator Sadiq on, among other subjects, Princess Di's consort, Doc Fayed, and OJ Simpson's arresting officer Mark Furman. On deeper listening, however, Byron's casually devastating horns — bantone sax as well as bass, perhaps alto and standard E-flat clarinet — emerge from the depths of the mix slushing through the dense tracks, shattering expectations.

"I don't care about jazz, or live in that world," Byron rasps. "I don't think about being a jazz musician every second of my life. Jazz is a curse that works to keep black musicians in their place. I especially don't like the term avant garde — it's the 'N' word of jazz. What is supposed to be avant garde in jazz is actually mainstream, you know? I'm simply not doing what other young black musicians are doing. I'm working to consolidate who I am."

"This record is what it is. I think of it as a black alternative record. I can listen to Bink and hear things weirder than what we did. Like my Mickey Katz record: it has almost nothing to do with jazz, except for the seriousness with which it's rendered. I can take myself away from that jazz way of thinking, but the interaction between musicians, we take that from jazz. Neither funk musicians nor bluesgrass musicians nor anyone else have that thing, the interaction that my bands have, though they may play very well."

Maybe ways I write have more in common with Nirvana than jazz composers.

"I tell you," Byron asserts, "putting this album together, I thought a lot about Schoenberg about James Brown about Mandrill — and in different ways they're all present in it. A lot of my writing is about the music I like, and the music I've studied."

By now Byron is in full flow and I'm reluctant to interrupt, for fear of being charged with inhibiting his right to free expression.

"Another significant thing to me was the challenge of dealing with poetry in ways that I thought weren't corny. I have a regular sort of collaboration with Sadiq, we agree on the messages in his writing, then we recombine, adjust the music or his words. Before we did this one, we were listening to The [Henry] Rollins Band, how they put the poetry out front. It kind of relates to rap, but I like the freedom of spoken word. How it doesn't have to be in 4/4 time or have regular rhymes. As far as performing with Biz Markie, I felt it was important people see the difference between what he does and what we do, but that we're still down with that. He's one of my favourite musicians — not real old style like, say, Grandmaster Flash, but one of my people, about my age. We've covered some of his hits, too."

In a rare pause to catch his breath, there's just enough time to imagine Byron slugging his shoulders at the other end of the line. After all, this is the man who answers a call with a "Yo," like he's saying "It's your money. Start talking."

"So if the jazz cats don't want to give it up to me," he continues, "that's fine. I've done diverse solo-instrumentalist things that the real jazz cats know I'm around."

Indeed they do. Since his arrival in New York some ten years ago, fresh from Boston's Berklee School of Music, Byron has carved out a living space for the clarinet almost singlehandedly. You can see him in Robert Altman's film *Kansas City*, performing with his characteristic edge, displaying his manner of rising up out of nothing to kill with a

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phases, as his fearless vocalistic quality embraces the occasional squawk. A few years ago, Wynton Marsalis invited Byron to perform solo at a New York Lincoln Centre tribute to Thelonious Monk, though Marsalis and Byron seem unlikely to get along. As if in answer to the arch traditionalism which has become entrenched at the Centre under Marsalis's influence, Byron has curated an annual alt-jazz series at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, where he scheduled cometet Graham Haynes's HipHop ensemble, Latin jazz pianist Edsel Gomez, Boston's EtherOrchestra, and organ trio Medeski Martin & Wood, as well as Existential Dred. In addition, Byron's horn work has stood out in groups led by drummer Bobby Previte, and in Vernon Reid's most recent project, the heavily amplified Masque. Whatever the setting, Byron securely holds his own. If he wants to. Mostly it's not what he has in mind.

"I'm not aiming at a market, I'm trying to define a space," he insists. "It's a space that me and I think a lot of other funky black intellectuals are into. It's Afrocentric with a world view, a different headspace than that of the rappers, who've never been out of the hood, who don't read science fiction or other literature, or care about Hitchcock movies, for instance. When you make music, you try to define your space, I think, and if you're successful, over time the circle of people who identify with that space grows. Robert Johnson, for instance, here was a black man in the American South who played blues, but not exactly blues, either. His circle of identifiers has expanded over the years, today, his listeners are certainly not all black people from the South, like him."

"So this record is about, my little space, more than anything else. I've always played my take on the repertoire I've chosen, whether it's Bug Music or the music of Mosey Katz. You saw us at the Newport Jazz Festival last year? Well, we didn't play the 40s stuff the way Doc Hyman or some jazz repertory guy would play it. Bug Music represents stuff I'm interested in compositionally, but not stylistically —

and I'm interested, in a sort of academic way, in setting the record straight, testifying to who is who. Same way Mandrill was my favourite group when I was a kid, and we do their songs pretty faithfully, yeah, at least in more of a transcription type way than we do 'til 6 Was 9'. What I'm trying to do is make the stuff live, so the arrangements oscillate between reading the tunes faithfully and giving latitude to the musicians. The solos and the way people swing in our versions are original — we're not attempting straight up-and-down covers. But anyone familiar with those Mandrill tunes would immediately recognise the songs, the rhythms, the basic structures."

Well, I suggest, maybe this is a record for a house party, the kind of thing those domo players you tell your stories to would have on in the background?

"It would have to be a fairly political house party," Byron corrects. "Yes, there are dance tunes on the album. Stuff relevant to that activity. But most you can sit and listen to."

In order to get Byron talking on specific aspects of his work, I willingly play the part of Lester Bowles' overly earnest jazz journalist, crossed with Byron's ignorant Mary Beth Shoemaker. Isn't a lot of the poetry and talk aimed at your funky black intellectual audience? I suggest. Does it intentionally exclude whites?

"Only if you don't want to know what it is like to talk to us," he shoots back. "Maybe that's just your perspective. I think we're putting ourselves forward in this album honestly, in a way a lot of people might be scared to do. But if you don't think this sort of thing I'm talking about happens to black men who aren't young, who don't wear dreadlocks, just ask someone like Kenny Barron about his experiences."

"Look," he snaps, "what I've done is based on choices I've made, and it's been honest, not commercial or non-commercial. This band of mine [with Sadio, vocalist Dean Bowman, keyboardist Uri Carline, usually guitarist David Gilmore, bassist Reggie Washington and drummer Rodney Holmes] are three years old, but a lot of jazz cats have chosen not to cover it. They ignore what I'm doing now, and say I'm still playing Mosey Katz. It's like people want to think I'm the cat who plays whatever it is they can deal with. So I'm avant garde to people who like only avant garde. But nobody would call Gi Scott-Heron avant garde, and what he put out was funky, Afro-centric, spoken word, something like we do on *Nu Blackplatoon*. Nobody tells Medeski, Martin &



“Jazz is a curse that works to keep black musicians in their place. I especially don't like the term avant garde — it's the 'N' word of jazz.”

Wood they're avant garde, because they're playing some funk beats. It's OK for Roy Hargrove to play in front of a bunch of Cuban musicians, though somebody ought to ask him if he ever gave a damn about Cuban music before. Nobody cares if [guitarist] Marc Ribot tries to play some Cuban music [with his Los Cubanitos Positivos], whatever that's about.

"I'm into whatever music I can make, and all these records have different things in them. It's not so much that I enjoy doing all these things. It's just always been this way for me. I have enough musical skills that I can do music I'm not close to exactly, relate to it in a way that's appealing to me. I always want to have enough resources to do the music I'm interested in, but I can't think of what I'm doing in commercial terms. My next record, I hope, will have Malow and Slavinsky on it. I'll probably do it for Blue Note — and Blue Note is not as interested in the pure jazz image as you might think. The experience the people at that label have had with Cassandra Wilson and with US3 have given them some new ideas."

"Most people don't have only one kind of music in their homes, and I just think it's unfairly imposed on black musicians that they can only play one kind of music, and that if one doesn't play one kind of music, it's strange. Look, we had to make an organisation to be able to put forth the idea of black rock, for God's sakes," he continues, referring to Vernon Reid and Greg Tate's Black Rock Coalition, "and rock has always been a collective, integrated thing."

One reason Israeli-born pianist Uri Carline, another formidable musical eclectic, is so valuable in Byron's group is his complete command of the Afro-Cuban piano idiom, as well as much classical music and a range of period jazz styles. Warning to the eclectic theme, Byron reiterates. "I'm into compositional variety. There are obscure Latin arrangers who are really important to me, who are, in my opinion some of the great composers of my time, comparable to people in jazz like Trane and Monk."

"And I don't have to work at being provocative or try to be provocative, because I am provocative, just because I play different kinds of music. That's what's going on. Maybe people aren't going to come to hear Existential Dred if they like Mosey Katz, because people don't choose music they don't identify with. But to me, all these musics are home." *Nu Blackplatoon* is out this month on Blue Note (through EMI). Don Byron's Existential Dred tours the UK in June; see Soundings for details.

Sun City Girls are America's most elusive group. Impossible to pin down, they used to leave chaos in their wake, until they found the perfect audience for their exotic noise-Improv on a boat to Sumatra. In a rare interview, they recall some eventful road stories for Douglas Wolk

For more than 15 years now, Sun City Girls have been both America's best kept secret and its most unpredictable group. Reaching a peak of high invention one minute and plumbing depths of puerile vulgarity the next, their very unpredictability ensures their underground status. Also, their music never stays in one place long enough for the entertainment industry to get a convenient handle on them. Indeed, it's impossible to guess how any given SCG performance or release might turn out. Over the course of 15 albums, mountains of cassette-only releases and a bunch of singles, they've tackled free improvisation, lame 70s pop covers, industrial noise, Fugs-style campfire folk, grinding instrumental drone rock, epic Sun Ra-inspired jazz composition, spoken word comedy, and a heap of other styles the musicologists have yet to find a name for. So far, their career high points are two albums of "World Music" from imaginary countries, *Torch Of The Mystics* and 330.003 *Crossdresses From Beyond The Rig-Veda*. To Sun City Girls borders — stylistic or territorial — are for transgressing, even if hopping genres carries the risk of misjudging landings and falling flat on their faces. Indeed, they often play like they're on the verge of collapse, but no matter how loose or added they might get, on those rare occasions when their musical telepathy fails them, their falls remain singular and spectacular.

Sun City Girls may be a trio — brothers Alan and Rick Bishop, and their longtime collaborator Charles Gocher Jr. — but what they lack in manpower they make up for in the breadth of their respective tastes and perspectives. Alan plays bass (among a few dozen other instruments) and sings in a voice that reveals the depth of his interest in Middle Eastern religious music. He is also a UFO and conspiracy theory expert. Gocher's stylistic grounding is in jazz, which possibly explains why his drumming is often the deceptively smooth force holding the group's freeform freakouts together. In contrast, his lyrics and liner notes display a fascination with insanity. And as their record sleeves suggest (guitars/pianos/multi-instrumentalist Rick is fascinated by Egyptian and Indian mythology — in particular, the cult of the goddess Kali).

"It's hard to explain," he says during a long distance phone conversation which represents one of the few times the group has agreed to come into direct contact with the music media. "You can read all you want of books on Kali, but for me it's a little more personal. A religion that worships a goddess who carries around severed heads, and can kill any demon, and is worshipped in a cremation ground — that's pretty damn interesting to me. And to have millions of followers. I figure the people in India, they're no less religious than anyone else, and they're not worshipping a dead guy on a cross, they're worshipping a goddess in a cemetery who's hacking away at bodies."

"You can apply those ideas to music, as well. If you take something that raw, and apply it to how you play your guitar, that might be how you communicate with X or Y."

Here he is perhaps obliquely referring to "X + Y = Fuck You," his brother Alan's

vertiginous stream-of-augmented-consciousness monologue, complete with tape-collage pulse track, that opens the 1993 album *Kultower*, which was the first release on the group's Abduction label. The song concludes, "If you can comprehend polyrhythmic murder to the tune of ignorance is bliss, you know there will never be a critic who will ever be qualified to critique this." Indeed it is awfully hard to explain what Sun City Girls do — on their rare lapses into sense, they seldom sustain a single line of logic for long. Their most recent cassette, recorded one night on Mount Shasta in California, is aptly called *The Great North American Tricksters*, and at times they embody the mythical trickster archetype forever fooling anyone who thinks they know what to expect from them, inducing mayhem

whenever complacency threatens, hiding behind masks both literal and metaphorical, and living in the "thin places" where the heavens and the earth meet the flats of Phoenix, Arizona, the peaks of Seattle. Legends spring up around them. The story is told

THE ROAD TO KALI



The Goddess Kali

of a show in Boston where they played a song-based set, then chewed some strange kind of root, started frothing at the mouth, and played for four more hours until the club was forced to pull the plugs on them to get them off. And that's nothing next to the tales they themselves spin, in fact, in the trickster tradition of The Residents, it's sometimes hard to tell where the facts and the myths meet.

But some things are clearer than others. The part-Lebanese Bishop brothers were born in Michigan and they've been playing together since the '70s. "Alan is ten months older than me," Rick says, "which is about as close as you can get without being twins. When my parents had Al, they figured, Oh, what the hell, he's going to need a guitar player, so let's get it out of the way." In the early '80s they moved to Arizona, where they got involved in the open-mic scene. "We walked in [to an open-mic club] one day, and this guy was standing on a chair with one foot in the air, a tape recorder in one hand and a drumstick in the other, doing a little scat singing." That was Charlie Gocher. The three of them started playing together not long after. Around the same time, the Bishops played in a group called Paris 1942 with The Velvet Underground's Moe Tucker, who was also living in Arizona at the time. The group only played a few shows, including one in LA on the same night that Nico was appearing at another venue down the street. "The review the next day said that Paris 1942 had people running for the doors in just minutes," Rick recalls, adding, "I wish it could have gone on longer." A single of the group's rehearsal tapes, *rodish near-*

instrumentals graced by Alan's wail of a voice and Tucker's insistent percussion whirrs, appeared a few years ago, and an album is due later this year.

Alan, meanwhile, somehow ended up playing bass in the skate-rock group JFA (Jodie Foster Army) and Sun City Girls did their first major tour as JFA's opening act. That hardcore audiences weren't exactly prepared for the Girls' semi-improvised, mostly instrumental, pan-ethnic weirdness was just fine as far as the trio was concerned. "I still think our first live show was one of the greatest things we ever did," Rick asserts. "It was in 1981, opening for Black Flag, with a completely punk audience. But by the end of the show, after a few brass doorknobs whizzed past us, we had a bunch of skinheads on stage playing with us — we let them play horns, and finally they accepted us."

The first, self-titled Sun City Girls album, released in 1984, and its successor, 1986's *Grazzo Of Miracles*, found them playing rather tentatively with Middle Eastern themes and hints of jazz. With 1987's *Horse Cock Preceptor* they took their first serious left turn: it's a loud, messy, gleefully nasty, Fugs-inspired album, entirely lacking in delicacy — sample track title "Eyeball In A Quart Jar Of Snort" and bluntly funny in a way that even surprised themselves. "It was way out in leftfield," Rick recalls, "but it was one of those necessary releases."

Then they retreated to making cassettes, releasing more than 20 tapes — now deleted — containing improvised music, early takes on themes reprised



Five Essential Recordings



Torch Of The Mystics

(Tupelo TUP44 CD Released 1990)

The Grift's masterpiece: A hallucinatory, savage recasting of Middle Eastern and Latin American melodies, modes and instrumentation, it's also just about their most through-composed record. The group all but leaps physically out of

the speakers and stuffs psychoactive mushrooms down your throat, while Rick Behop's guitar burns holes in everything around it. Outtakes from the *Torch* sessions filled half a dozen singles, and they've continued to turn up as recently as *Box Of Charnelous*. Watch out for "The Shining Path", a devoted take on a very familiar tune.

Live From Planet Boomerang

(Major 5662 2XLP Released 1992)

The best of their many improv-based records put the wraps on their Arizona period. Badly recorded and rough in places, it's got a dizzying languorous feel to it. Two sides are devoted to long, quiet free pieces. "Just Say No To Why" with piano and sax, and "Where Eyes Fly Low" for rock instruments. Then there are a few flashes of electronics (notably "Music Of The Great Southwest"), a collaboration with Maybelle Mental, some flipped out chordless rock, a subdued remake of *Torch*'s "Space Prophet Dagon", and a nearly unrecognizable Duke Ellington piece.

Kaliflower

(Abolition no number CD Released 1993)

The first release on the Grift's own label offers a quick overview of their favorite styles: the free associative monologue of "X + Y = Fuck You", the quasi-ethnographic call-and-response of "And So The Dead Tongue Sang", a 15 minute trance-dance version of "The Venerable Song", the Far Eastern audio verve of "Archaeopteryx In The Slammer" (recorded on a Bangkok street corner), and the absurdist power-rock of "I Knew A Jew Named Frankenstein".

330,003 Crossdressers From Beyond The Rig-Veda

(Abolition ABOT008 2XCD Released 1996)

The Grift's most musically accomplished recording to date and, in many ways, the follow-up to *Torch*, incorporating a gorgeous 35 minute collaboration with violinist Eynold Kang, several gamelan pieces, a barbed wire cover of the theme song from the Hindi film *Apna Desh*, Alan's slow-eyed "CCC" (as in "Calcutta Codename Cona"), 40 or so instruments (Bengali shrouded fiddle, Aunton, Moroccan chanter, gongs), and some deeply weird use of microphones.

Dante's Disneyland Inferno

(Abolition ABOT007 2XCD Released 1996)

The closest thing the Grift have made to a Charles Gocher solo record — a showcase for all the most diseased parts of his mind, a terrifying collection of psychotic monologues, tape collages, singing horror business and parodies of Rodgers/Hammerstein and Brecht/Weill. It showcases Colburn's most effective production work. This is where they crush listeners' "soft purple eggshell minds" "A Secret Revealed Unwittingly", featuring a chopped-up set of voices talking about epiphanies and almost making sense, is physically disorienting.

later on, an "audio letter", and several volumes of instrument-free "Clovain Theatre". Finally, in 1990 they resurfaced with the superb *Torch Of The Mystics* and a newfound seriousness of purpose and intensity of execution. A string of singles — many numbering from the *Torch* recording sessions — and half a dozen albums followed over the next three years, as well as another American tour in 1992. On that tour, they hooked up with producer Scott Colburn, a longtime fan brought in to record the group live, who has worked with them ever since. In 1993 Rick Behop moved to Seattle, followed a year later by Alan. Charlie and Scott. They set up house together, built a studio and settled in for some serious recording and archive-combing.

Though the Grift no longer live there, Colburn's Gravelvoice studio in Seattle remains the centre of activity for a peculiar group of musicians — including Omax Golden Twins, violinist Eynold Kang and Miss Murgatard — many of whom have also collaborated with the Grift. Colburn, who is also the in-house engineer for John Fahey's Revenant label, describes his recording philosophy thus: "You would normally do it this way, but... what's the opposite of that?" He is responsible for the rich, bizarre sonic textures gracing SCG albums in recent years. Sometimes these are the result of his mimes, other times they arise out of the unusual performance scenarios which he pushes the group into.

"We were doing a big session one night, and they said, 'I think we're done for tonight,'" Colburn says by way of example. "But I gave Rick a magazine with a rubber band around it, and to Alan a cardboard box and a cardboard tube. I gave Charlie a pair of mallets and I pointed at the heater in the basement. I said, 'I'm rolling tape — go!' They had a little difficulty in trying to figure out what to do. On the tape, you can hear Charlie going, 'There's not a whole lot you can do with this heater.' But that got them kind of focused on having no instruments. Rick started telling a story, and everybody else came in right behind him."

At times, in concert, Sun City Grift seem to be imitating a rite rather than giving a performance. One of their standards, in fact, is a simple pattern called "The Venerable Song (The Meaning Of Which Is No Longer Known)".

"There have been performances when we go into it knowing, OK, we want to raise something here, if we can," Rick explains. "It's not based on any system, it's more a hodgepodge, but sometimes it can be very powerful. It doesn't necessarily have to be a spirit or a demon we're invoking, it can be a feeling for ourselves, so we can enter our own little universe on stage, to banish the crowd."

That banishment can be literal. Their performances can enrage or repel an audience, not least because they tend to rely on improvisation, sometimes on a handful of themes they've chosen in advance, sometimes not. Denying the audience familiar parts of entry, they try never to play the same piece in the same town twice — in the build-up to one show, Colburn remembers them combing six year old set lists to make sure they didn't duplicate anything. And occasionally they'll do a show that's flat-out weird. Rick recalls one such night: "We did our tenth anniversary show in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and we decided to do the entire Horse Cock Preceptor album, without having practiced it in six years. That was another show where we just decided, well, you Y take it and like it."

Probably their most infamous performance was at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco, when they opened for Thinking Fellers Union Local 282 (the latter named a record *Admiring The Bishops* partly as a reference to the brothers). For one of the biggest shows they'd ever played, they decided to turn up without any instruments. Colburn explains, "I'd prepared a tape that was a bunch of cricket noises and such for a skit they wanted to do about three hobos waiting for a train, and it ended up getting out of control. I came up on stage as another character and started dancing. We ended up getting charged \$200 to replace the carpet on stage — Charlie was throwing marshmallows at me, and I was stomping them into the carpet. And for the rest of the set, everyone else was having a hootenanny. By the end, the Thinking Fellers couldn't actually go on stage, and they had to rip the carpet up. That show pissed a lot of people off."

"Oh, it was a classic," adds Rick. "A lot of people were upset with it, but that's just the breaks. Whenever we play twice or three times in a town, you have to see all the shows. We didn't know we were going to do that until that day, but we thought, if



there's going to be 600 people there, let's do something they'll remember. It was kind of tweaking people's expectations so they'll know better next time." A similar skit became Jack's Creek, the second-most universally hated SCG album. The champion in the hate category would have to be *Midnight Cowboy's Film* (anemoia, a 1966 cassette of intentionally atrocious covers — "Fly By Night", "Radar Love", "He And Mrs Jones" — and even dumber tape-speed-fuzzing originals, reissued on CD and LP a few years back. Rick concurs: "Yeah, it's pretty bad stuff."

On the subject of bad SCG recordings, last year's messy *Live From The Land Of The Rising*, recorded on a weeklong 1996 tour of Japan, is also far from their best. It mostly finds the group in its lunge-and-blurt free-improv mode (along the lines of their difficult 1991 album *Down Of The Devil*), but playing standard rock instruments. "Crime Scene Clean", a collaboration with The Boredoms' Alan, is an interesting Amor Dui-like percussive jam, but without a preset plan to give it direction, a little of Rick Bishop's guitar noodling goes a long way, and when he switches to violin for a few tracks, he comes across like a bad imitation of Cecil Taylor.

In the last five years, the Girls' live appearances have been highly sporadic — two trips to San Francisco, half a dozen Seattle shows, the Japanese tour, and that's it — but they've been recording on overtime. Their most recent album, *Box Of Chameleons*, is Columbia's biggest project with them to date: a 128-track triple CD collection of previously unheard and mostly haphazardly taped recordings from the 80s and 90s, with quick detours to 1971 (a couple of prank calls doing back to the youth), and 1979 (a deranged title rap called "Asian Women On The Telephone").

Anyone who has been following the group for a while will find some familiar traits: Godher doing schizophrenic rants over cocktail lounge jazz; some tuneless screwing around on whatever unusual instruments are at hand. But any comfort listeners might find in such familiarity is undermined by recordings of street noise, creepy recitations, live hardcore tracks, collaborations with Tokyo's Ruins and Eyvind Kang, scrape-and-tip sound pieces, an out-of-tune Sumatran hoodoo, a brief Charlie Parker parody called "Ripper! The Bird", some rather lovely folk music, and even an almost-straight rock song that closes the final disc. Evidently conceptual continuity is not what they are after — on the contrary, they set out to cover as much (literary as possible, both musical and geographical) (a handful of tracks were recorded on trips to Bali, Morocco, Java and Egypt). The Girls are reportedly big fans of cult film maker Alejandro Jodorowsky, with whom they share an "anything as long as it's upsetting" attitude. Like watching Jodorowsky's uncult *El Topo*, three and a half hours of lo-fi Sanctivity can be a profound experience if you're in the right mood, almost unbearable when you're not. As a safety measure, San City Girls are best approached with the same caution reserved for unstable mind-altering substances.

The Girls' recording binge is ongoing. Early this year they completed a mammoth two-month session with Columbia that produced 23 reels of basic tracks. They have completed the soundtrack to a film called *Duke*, a Japanese movie about an underground alien base in New Mexico; the score was taped at the same sessions as their *Phos...*, *Deceiver Of Men* and *Allegemout* soundtracks, and all three are characterised by quiet, atmospheric improvisations recorded direct to four-track. In

PHOTO: SODA

addition, the Majors label has just reissued the rock improv disc *Valentines From Motahan* and the slow, subtle *Bright Surroundings, Dark Beginnings*, and more releases are planned for the near future, including a possible singles compilation. The label is definitely one to look out for: their singles are often even harder to come by than the albums, and a few of them — particularly a spoken word thing called "Napoleon And Josephine" (which one fan turned into a comic book) — rank with their best work.

Besides their SCG work, the Grls have shown up on a bunch of other records. They've backed Phoenix oddball and self-described "laundry room Satanist" Eddy Detroit on a number of albums and singles, played with Eugene Chadbourne on his *Country Music In The World Of Islam* album, and worked on a rare drone album released under the name Square 9. That's not to mention a peculiar record credited solely to Princess Nectine, an anthology of whacked-out recordings from Burmese pop tapes for which nobody will claim any responsibility. "All I can say is 'production involvement,'" Colburn mumbles mysteriously. *Revenant* has just released a lovely album of Rick's guitar and piano solos, *Salvador Kik*, under the name Sir Richard Bishop, while brother Alan's solo pieces are released as *Alvinus B* — as in *alvinus bulo*, the toad that can induce hallucinations if you lick it.


The most significant solo SCG project so far, however, is a collaboration between Charlie Gocher and Scott Colburn called *Pint Sized Sportacus*. As the title suggests, it's a spoken word-plus-music concept album very loosely inspired by Stanley Kubrick's slave revolt movie starring Kiri Douglas. They're helped out by a handful of fellow Seattle weirdos, most notably Eyvind Kang, who screeches violin and squeezes B-movie organ all over the disc. Gocher's compositions owe more to old American jazz and pop than the Bishop brothers' interest in Asian modalities. In another nod to Charlie Parker, "A Constructive Illusion" lifts part of its melody from "Now's The Time". He's also got a prodigious gift for disturbing monologues — as Rick puts it, "He might write 'em before he spouts 'em, but sometimes he'll spout

'em and then write 'em. Charlie is one of those people where you don't know where it comes from."

Indeed, most of *Pint Sized Sportacus* sounds like an inventive radio play, except that everybody's talking at half normal speed and almost none of it makes sense (isober, anyway). The album might be desperately incoherent, even from moment to moment, but its ambition is admirable. And a few passages are truly amazing, especially "Hymn For Kali Ma", featuring Simone Modell singing a melody that sounds like the loomed it off a sixth generation 'film' cassette, with Gocher surrounding her with a hailstorm of percussion, and Colburn drenching the whole thing in dubby reverb.

Between recording sessions, Sun City Grls devote as much time as possible to travel — especially in India, East Asia and North Africa — adding to their collection of unusual instruments, and sitting in with street musicians. Of course, learning from locals works both ways. Dredging up a memory that somehow summarises Sun City Grls' aesthetic of chance and exoticism, Rick recalls: "We were on a big passenger boat from Java to Sumatra, riding second class down below. A bird was playing in the lounge, an Indonesian band that would play Indonesian pop songs and tacky Western numbers for the crew and the passengers. We noticed they were letting people come up and sing, so we asked them if they'd let us play. So there's me, Al and Charlie playing in front of about 200 people on the ship, including the skipper in the front row. We started out with "House Of The Rising Sun", to sort of test the barriers. But then we decided to shake it up a little bit — we played "Esta Susan In Cosa?" (a weird little salsa-punk number from *Horse Cook Phopner*), and then we went wild with freeform, and people applauded at the end of every song. We heard people talking to each other afterwards, saying things like, 'Yes, this is American jazz.' That's as good as we're going to get." Sir Richard Bishop's *Salvador Kik* album is out now on *Revenant* (through *Corgi*). Sun City Grls releases are available via mail order from *Gravelvoice*, PO Box 45066, Seattle, WA 98145, USA. E-mail: info@gravelvoice.com





After rising to prominence with the late 60s sonic makeover on a series of albums which folk, soul, jazz and dub. In spite of that, his best

feeling

“I’m pontificating,” booms John Martyn. “Well, of course. In a church you’ve got to pontificate, am’rcha? Pon, pon, teddy-pon. And the pontiff... what? What’s the point of it all?” All I did was ask whether he had a guru. Not such a stupid question, surely — there must have been something, somebody, some beacon guiding him past the myriad obstacles and buffeting winds of a 35 year voyage through music — and I sure didn’t expect him to name some moneyed Maharishi, either. But there he is, old John Martyn, crumpled in his red leather armchair, rgormotised and wheezing with laughter. “Oh, ya beaute!” he cries, finally, when the mirth lets his face uncurl. “Took me quite by surprise, that one. No I do not — simple answer. No, no indeed!” A few more hoots, then. “If I had a guru, it would be Chick Murray, a Scottish comedian. I’ll give you one of his jokes now: I was out walking the other evening. This fellow accosted me, and said, ‘Excuse me, sir,

electric folk renaissance, **John Martyn** uprooted songform and subjected it to a serious rank alongside the best of Tim Buckley and Van Morrison for their radical fusions of music, he says, is yet to come. Words: Rob Young. Photography: Michele Turriani

gravity's pull

is that the moon up there?" As you would. And I said: "I've no idea — I'm a stranger here myself!"

"For me, it's Zen," Martyn continues. "He was apparently a very difficult man, but obviously a very deep thinker."

John Martyn is midway through moving into a small, former Scots Congregational church next door to his current home in the minute, landlocked Scottish hamlet of Robertson. Above his fireplace, with logs burning in the iron woodstove, are, in descending order: a gilt, French Ancien Régime mirror; a round portrait of the poet Robbie Burns; a pair of Buddhas; and a china scroll bearing the Lord's Prayer. "Just about covers the faiths," he says, dropping immediately into the vernacular of a Deep South hellfire baptist preacher: "Fuck who ya want — Buddha will forgive yah, and

yah can also pray to de Lawd. All in one day, right on the same rattle shelf — now, who'da believed it? Pass me that rattle, I'm feeling holy!"

Like his patchwork shrine, John Martyn's voices (both spoken and sung), his music — his moods even — are quilted together from scraps of experience gathered during the course of a truly nomadic life. During a conversation, he'll nonchalantly slip from Sarf England drawl to Scots (b)rogue; ironic Lord Snooty sniff to brimstone Preacher Man; character sketches of Lee Perry or Leon Thomas. Since his birth in 1949, to an English mother and Scottish father, he's forever been shuttling the length and breadth of the equally chequered British landscape, taking on whichever shape suited him best at a given moment. "I'm above nationality," he says. "I was born in New Malden. My mother couldn't hang on. She was English, you see. In fact she wasn't: she was Jewish Belgian. So I'm a Scots Belgian Jew. To you."

Aix-en-Provence, France, winter 1967: American singer Robin Frederick writes a song called "Sandy Grey" after Nick Drake stands her up in a French bar. In the summer of that year she hitchhikes to London, where she meets 18-year-old John Martyn. Exit Ms. Frederick stage left, rapidly, but the song remains: "Sandy Grey" turns up the following year, as the second track on Martyn's debut *Island LP, London Conversation*. Six years later Drake makes his tragic exit — pursued by demons — but not before Martyn has written "Solid Air," the lugubrious word-in-your-ear song addressed to Drake, whose anxiety attacks, depression and dysfunctionality had driven him to the brink of self-destruction. Based on the spectral chord shifts and tremolo-Rhodes licks in Pharoah Sanders's "Astral Traveling" (from *Themba*), "Solid Air" sealed Martyn's reputation as a master of mood and pace. It came in the midst of an intensely happy period in Martyn's life. He was married to Beverley, the Coventry-born folk singer with whom he'd already released several albums in the late 60s and early 70s, and was enjoying the kind of extended summer of love which was also a feature of the lives of Tim Buckley and Van Morrison. Like Martyn, they were each building their own canons of electric, visionary, pastoral songs.

Martyn denies knowing the Sanders tune, and seems genuinely amazed at the companion. "I never thought of that. You could be right. That's interesting — I'd like to know which came first, the chicken or the egg? I probably just beat him to it [in fact, *Themba* predates *Solid Air* by at least two years] as it is in C minor? I'll kill him!"

When John Coltrane was drenching jazz in acid, taking fellow Afrobeat Sanders with him on a journey to the light, Martyn was in Scotland learning folk blues with guitarist Hamish Imlach, the teacher he now uncannily resembles. He never got to hear Coltrane in the flesh, but remains a fervent admirer of his innovations — on *Philetopia*, a live album released in 1983, he scats the vocal line from *A Love Supreme*. "It all became very spiritual for a while, didn't it?" he says. "And I actually believed it! [Laughs] Then I find out they're all fucking ravers, selling junk to each other — peeing up and down the bars and beating their missuses up. It came as a bit of a shock, really, 'cause you get your brainbox built up, thinking, ah, these cats know so much... Coltrane might have cleaned up, but few people ever do, when they get that deep into it. I can't think of one."

"I think you'll find that Coltrane was like the French impressionists," he continues, referring to the music he loves most, the chromatic tone poems of composers such as Debussy, Saint-Saëns, Ravel. "Breaking the rules. Before Saint-Saëns, you weren't allowed to put two flats together. Two sharps together, two flats together: sounds enharmonic. It's odd now, because we've changed, and everyone loves [Debussy's] *Clair De Lune*. That's got sharps and flats jammed onto its arse, but it's really pretty and beautiful, become a bit of a cliché. But in its day it was seen as almost unacceptable."

"I never really had a relationship with jazz. Some great tunes came out of it. Weather Report were a big influence on me. Zawmul remains a shining example. But I've never been interested in tricky and difficult time changes, because nine times out of ten, they're merely an excuse for the musician to show off. It's a bit precious and '19th century Vienna'. There's guys like Oscar Peterson, for example, who are absolute geniuses, but I couldn't eat a whole one. Same with Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grappelli: beautiful, but I couldn't eat a whole one. It's hard enough to eat a packet of myself for two hours every night."

They were starlight, they were golden: the secret troupe of electric troubadours at the dawn of the 70s whose mission was to throw new light into corners left darkened by the psychedelic supernova. For these Judiths and Judases — Dylan, of course, and Van Morrison and Tim Buckley, plus Sandy Denny, Laura Nyro, Tom Rapp's Pearls Before Swine, Robert Wyatt, Nick Drake, Richard and Linda Thompson — there were so many songs to write and sing, so many subjects to serenade and objects to love. In England, ex-pat American producer Joe Boyd almost singlehandedly created a canon, a label family, his Witchseason production company helped turn parent company Island into a logo you could trust, with a roster that included Traffic, the Thompsons, Free and Fairport Convention. Folk, and folk rock, may have become newly entrenched, but the mud had baked hard in the sun that was shining down on the massed countercultural hordes at the tail end of the 60s. Fairport's big cheeses, harked back to the feudal system on their album *Liege And Lief*, tankard-quaffing folkies from John Renbourn to Bert Jansch, Pentangle and

Magna Carta were peddling esoteric Luddism, Fotheringay and Steeleye Span were having trouble breaking rock down into anything smaller than ungainly lumps, and Robin Williamson's incredible Straw Band were content to play village idiots.

John Martyn and his ilk brought a torrent of refreshing rain to this parched scene. Martyn's liquefied songs turned the hard ground into a slurry of slurred notes, split into pure trace elements by Echoplex electrolysis. Folk had been reworked briefly to play its traditional role as transmitter of received wisdoms, homespun truths and hayseed logic, but the conservatism inherent in its reliance on tried and trusted instrumental technique and equipment, and in its zealous guarding of an acoustical/analogue mindset over the encroaching power lines, revealed itself in the image of Pete Seeger at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, waving an axe over electric Dylan's new marmalade. And then this band of gypsies revisited the form like Albert Ayler rewed up the American spiritual in came electric pianos, Wurlitzers, Rhodes tasters and expanded percussion sections, with wash and volume pedals to create fluid phantasms across the stereo picture, serpentine rock and funk rhythms, prototype drum machines. The refrain took second fiddle to extended instrumental passages and the voice carried a new vulnerability that spoke of an existential fallibility, with no possibility of redemption for those who'd cut themselves off from folk tradition and its safety nets of community, history or family. On *Solid Air*, longstanding partner Danny Thompson's double bass trips up the time signatures, while Martyn forces the performances of their lives out of Fairport Conventions' core members — the rhythm section of Dave Pegg and Dave Matlock, John 'Rabbit' Bundrick on keyboards, Simon Nicol on mandolin. Their reading of Skip James's spooked blues 'I'd Rather Be The Devil' is revisionist (rather than reverential) reconstituting Britfolk as a glittering sea of liquid mud flecked with gold dust.

"I was so naive, and so young, and so self-obsessed, that I honestly do not have a handle on it," is Martyn's recollection of the early Wildseason days. "Those were the days of Pearly Spencer. Those were the days of the dancing, whirling dervish — I breezed through them. I don't think about anything, really, at all!" In an NME interview from the period, Martyn banged on about letting his heart rule his head. Nothing much has changed in that respect, except that now he says, "I would express it in a less aggressive fashion. I think it's important to find a balance between the head and the heart. I continually fight cynicism, for instance. But one is occasionally driven to it. I can't suffer fools gladly, and that's occasionally taken as arrogance by other people. By that, I mean bankers. Guys who are after your bread — there are guys out there putting out records of mine, they don't know a hatchet from a crochets. I just like to be upful and bright — that's the message with all the music I create."

Road To Ruin, *Bless The Weather*, *Solid Air*, *Inside Out*, *Sunday's Child*, *One World* — a series of the great unbroken musical innings — a parallel to Tom Chalkley's series of albums from *Happy Sad* through *Stanzor*, or *Cans* output between 1968-74. But Martyn was never simply the "upful and bright" sylvan merman of song. "I wanted to be a doctor — I should have been that," he reflects "I put an awful lot of strain on the family life, being a musician. You get trapped there's a devil in me that definitely comes out, now and again. No question. Same as in everybody, I suppose. I was a bit more upfront about it. I don't quite know why. Without being a songwriter, I think I'd have probably been a lesser person."

The devil rode out in his music, too. "Dreams By The Sea" depicts an idyll shattered by paranoid suspicions, like Picasso's screaming beachside women. "Ain't No Saint",

from *Inside Out*, is drowled in a drunken slur. "Just get it together," he snaps, with no mental energy left for reasoned argument. "May You Never", written for his recently born son, contains a catalogue of admonishments that could easily have been autobiographical. "May you never lose your temper if you get in a bar-room fight/May you never lose your woman overnight."

Martyn steeped folk in acid, he made it vulnerable, open to all kinds of foreign invaders — free jazz, the ad infinitum of dub echo, and the ghost of the blues. Back in The Wire 124, Ian Penman honoured him as one the Great Lost British Voices alongside Kewen Ayers, Nick Drake, Kevin Coyne and John Cale. But none of those contemporaries leave you flying so high or idling so deep, nor so colourfully bruised as Martyn's songs. The real, darling story manifests graphically on the artwork of *Inside Out*: on one side, Martyn's silhouetted head is filled with a thunderstorm, while outside the sun blazes. On the back, the weather is reversed: sun in the brain, outside it's rain.



“For a while I had the reputation of a real bad boy: this man was going to punch you out, shoot you or fuck you”

Live At Leeds is about as far out as Martyn ever went — musically, at least. Stevens is a massive presence at the centre of this maelstrom, propelling the songs and fanning their elements apart. Melted in the heat, "Inside Out" stretched to 18 minutes of convulsive, chewy energy. Stevens only worked sporadically with Martyn after that, cropping up on some of the tracks on 1977's *One World*. What footprints did his "search and reflect" method leave in Martyn's music? "The things I learnt from John Stevens were things you wouldn't learn," as such, Martyn considers "There were thousands of things you learnt with John Stevens. A complex character. I liked him because he had a spiritual thing about him. The last time I worked with him, he said, 'Well, all set down, and sing a note — the note that you're most comfortable with.' Some of us sang better than others. And we came to this chord that we all liked."

Right — that's the chord we're going to write the piece about. Could you all remember the note you played? OK, write it down on the piano. Bang, bang, bang, and you're off. No emotional commitment! But there obviously is an emotional commitment, because you would be singing the note they were singing at the time, you must have a purpose. Do you feel like [he sings a high note], do you feel like [low note], do you feel [mid-range]? I liked him for that. Spontaneity is what I learnt from John Stevens. Nice guy, sadly missed. People misunderstood him, they misread him. Some people would see him as an arrogant little bastard at times, never thought of anyone but himself. I knew him: he was a gentle motherfucker, wouldn't raise his hand to a mouse, to a tiger, to a door — somebody else would do it for him. Others are going, 'He'd give you the shirt off his back.' And both things are true."

By the mid-70s, Martyn's lyrics suggested monsters hatching in the idyll. On 1974's *Sunday's Child* he's cast as a wandering star, revelling far from the fixed centre of his domestic life. He sends bullets back home from hotels 2000 miles

away ("Root Love"), protests his undying commitment ("One Day Without You"), and on "Clutches," in his now-frequent 'devil voice,' he proclaims how sweet it is to remain in the possession of his "residential woman." He also dedicated a pair of songs to his two young children, "My Baby Girl" and "Spencer The Rover", which both fall on the right side of closing.

If Sunday's *Child* marks an uneasy turning point in Martyn's career, *One World* is an Indian summer before the monsoon struck: divorce, alcoholism and worse. His voice contains a new hesitancy, a weary grinding of words in the throat's mill. Ecologists may have loved "messages" like "It's one world/like it or not/One world/Believe it or not," but for Martyn it's a realisation that leaves him "Cold and lonely." "Dancing" is a piece of special pleading: "Oh darling! I want you to try to understand! If you're leading the life of a music man/You gotta wander reelin' and a rockin' round the whole of the town 'Til the morning takes you home." He wanted to enjoy his success, but conflicting obligations were tearing him apart.

"I think you have to fight with people all the time," he reflects. "I think that's one of the reasons I went on the piss for a while. For a while I had the reputation of a real bad boy: this man was going to punch you out, shoot you or fuck you. I deliberately cultivated it because it kept people away from me. I want people away from me, basically. Obviously one loses one's innocence as one gets older, it becomes more difficult to speak. But I think innocence really is permanent."

Martyn took a busman's holiday in Jamaica during 1976, hanging out with Burning Spear, Max Romeo and Lee Perry, who co-wrote the faintly lewd rock number "Big Muff." "There was only three ways to get paid by that boy," is Martyn's recollection of working with Perry, "dodgy dollars, hookers, or blue movies. So eventually I just started doing it all for nothing. We were mostly doing the same thing at the same time. I wobbled in, and brought an Ecchoplex, and he'd never heard one before. The only difference was, he had two Reverends. I only had one, the bastard!"

Martyn also had a Rhythm Doctor — a drum machine wringing through the mst of "Small Hours" and "One World." He got more flack for that. "People thought it was so funny, that this geezer would walk onstage with a glorified metronome. They could not see that it was in fact a bass drum, with a kick drum at the top. A lot of the things I used to fiddle about with confused people at first."

John Stevens plays drums on "Big Muff," but Martyn's song structures generally seemed to be tightening up. "I became disillusioned by the attitude of the jazzers," he comments. "Basically, I found them very competitive, even more so than folk singers. I found them even more hustly and even more petty. And I've never been one for colonies. I don't like scenes [he speaks the word with his lips curled back]. Fuck the scene — there ain't no 'scene' — the whole thing's a scene."

"And you find that as your income increases because of your popularity the sharks get you. It becomes something else — it's absurd. The music industry should be run by angels!" He snickers, then transforms once again into a rawling, shouting Southern preacher man. "Gabriel, come down, blow your horn, bitch! It's time you made an appearance! I, the Reverend James John Martyn Ian David McGeachy — I'm demandin' you come down and sort this shit out! 'Cause they's fuckin' wid' yow harmonium!"



It's somehow appropriate that John Martyn should end up in a church: he seems ready for the pulpit. His latest album, a collection of cover versions released earlier this year, is called *The Church With One Bell* in tribute to the site of his latest fresh start. (His current label Independent sent him a list of suggestions for songs, and he apparently rattled them off straight onto tape, which explains the unusual mix, from Martyn favourites Sonny Boy Williamson, Elmore James and Randy Newman, to Portishead, Ben Harper, David Can Dance, and the sacred ground of Bille Holiday's "Strange Fruit.") Since 1980's *Grace And Danger*, a record bristling with raw nerves, open wounds and plea bargains after the break-up of his marriage, Martyn has been

lailing gently to earth. He's put out more than ten albums since the early 80s, but somehow — and almost all Martynophiles agree on this — he took on the appearance of Robin Williams's character in the Woody Allen movie *Deconstructing Harry*: an actor quite literally out of focus.

With Phil Collins's drumming and the Jaco Pastorious-influenced bass of John Gbiri, Martyn's style was on the edge of a new era. WEA, who picked him up after he fell away from Island, tried to repack him as an AOR star for the new decade, and sure enough, his next two LPs sailed into the charts. But his course still wasn't smooth: the title tracks of 1981's *Glorious Fool* swiped at the newly elected President Reagan ("I think it would have been much more fun if Audie Murphy had got the gig," he jokes), while the recording sessions for *Well Kept Secret* (1982) were interrupted by Martyn impaling his chest on a fence behind his house. None of it felt right. "It took me into a mode that didn't fit. And I dug it, I sung my best, despite my two punctured lungs. The fence that ruined my life!" — I'm surprised I haven't smashed the fucking thing for kindling."

It wasn't his only setback in the last 15 years. Lacking the focus and artist-centred commitment of a production house like Whitesnake, Martyn's subsequent work has been bouncing around too many different labels: back on Island for *Peace By Peace* (1986) and the live *Foundations* (87), then to the independent Permanent after Island rejected the tapes that became 1990's *The Apprentice*. Then relations with Permanent broke down following a misquipped attempt to re-record much of his 70s material. The original idea was Martyn's. "I wanted to do that because it sounded so different with the band, and I really liked the direction it was following, and I wanted a record of that. I don't record records to order, really. If you're 19, you can get showed around by those

motherfuckers as much as you like. When you're 50, you can turn around and go [he adopts a menacing Scottish accent], 'Where're ye taking me, pal?'"

A messy sequence ensued. The label issued the record

"Music should be a minor diversion, not a major culture explosion. As far as I'm concerned, good music is about as important as a good game of whist."

versions as *Couldn't Love You More*, without Martyn's blessing, then he remixed and re-recorded the new versions and put them out himself as *No Little Boy*. To complicate matters further, Permanent also released *No Little Boy*, adding three extra tracks. Compounding the error, Permanent have since metamorphosed into Artful, and have released some extremely shoddy *Artful* packages in the last two years, including a *Very Best Of* double set comprising the botched re-recordings. Martyn knows what he wants to do to the boss of Artful the next time they meet, and it's not charitable.

Unsurprisingly, he now "just wants some peace." Disillusioned with Green campaigning ("the marrowfat people"), he's trying to do his bit for various peace movements around the world. "To my incredible shame, I did not even know that CND

still existed. Can you dig that? Shows how you can be distracted by the 'music industry.' I used to do all the marches to London. The whole world is in a tangle. The one that I can maybe do something about is the undeclared apartheid in America. I've been banned from two states [Missouri and Alabama] for saying that. They don't like it when you say that I always carry a gun when I'm in America. Just to save my life, you understand..."

In 1996 he found himself sharing a label with Portishead: the album *And* revealed a sophisto take on contemporary downtempo beats and rhythms (Talvin Singh cooked up a memorable remix of "Sunshine's Better"). As we sit in his chapel, he plays me rough mix cassettes of new material for his next record, featuring his own live drum machine manipulations, and bubbling rhythms reminiscent of the darker moments on Sly Stone's *There's A Riot Goin' On*. The vocal tracks, he says, are rough guides, laid down while he was — as they say round his way — totally blottoed. "I like to be in control, but slightly out of it," he explains, when asked if writing is getting harder. "Yeah, it is harder to write words. And yet, to a degree, it's a lot easier. Things have never changed, honestly, my body's got older but the rest of me's just the fucking same. I'm still 19, the way I look at it. There's less drive to write now than there was. Although if I were deprived of the studio, for instance, and replaced in my 19 year old circumstances, I'd just pick up an acoustic guitar, and start again. Because that would be the only thing that would keep me happy. There's not much to do!"

So many of Martyn's songs seem directed towards a particular individual: a lover, one of his children, or an object of Martyn's copious scorn. Is such an object lacking now? "I never sang a love song to anyone in my life, not directly anyway," comes the surprising answer. "No, I'm not in the business of that. The reason I write love songs is mostly to expurgate and excise the pain of being involved in the situation. It also keeps certain things in your mind. I've lost a lot of friends, and I have songs about them, so I occasionally sing those, and it brings them back into my mind — I can see them walking, talking, and that's cool."

It's four o'clock in the afternoon in the middle of the Scottish landscape. Martyn is downing beer like lemonade, and is lobbing cars at the iron coal scuttle. The

three industries I hate most are film, fashion and music. They're all equally dishonest. The entertainment industry should be more giving and less taking. Because basically, it's money for old rope — you're getting money for what you like doing. People have to remember that it's a luxury, a frippery.

"Music should be a minor diversion, not a major culture explosion. As far as I'm concerned, good music is about as important as a good game of whist, canasta, or five card stud. I don't think you should ever take it seriously. It's what my old man said: if you think about things too much, then I believe you are doomed. Doomed forever. It's like Zen and archery. Shoot the bow without thinking of the target. I know it, 'cause I know when I'm good and when I'm bad. And when I'm good is when I'm not thinking about a damn thing. I know it sounds absurd, but that's the way to do it: think without thinking."

Once John Martyn has moved into his church for good, with his four Apple Macs and his home studio, he wants his own TV show. He dreams of getting groups up here to broadcast live from his living room. Meanwhile, he plans to turn six local cottages into an orphanage-cum-retreat for underprivileged city kids who've never seen the countryside. He wants to fill their heads with fresh air: "Once they've seen it, they'll always go back. It becomes a dream." He's readying a new album for the first half of next year, and a new group to tour with. There's no looking back. "The best is yet to come," he mutters. "Fuckin' better be. If it doesn't, it won't be for lack of time. I'm greatly flattered, because I can hear myself in just about every acoustic guitar player I hear these days, the last 20 years. They're all playing with the backslap, and I invented the fucker. 40 years ago, you couldn't get a job as a string player in a dance orchestra unless you could double on sax, and vice versa. The days of blowing bands like my older ones is over; thing to do is get a band, couple of scratchers maybe. I just want everything now. Give it to me. I want it yesterday. I demand it. I deserve it. I'm a beautiful person — give it to me, now." A giant, gruff laugh erupts from Martyn's belly, reverberates among the old church rafters, and nearly sets that one bell to ringing. □ The Church With One Bell is available on *Independiente* (through *Sony*). All John Martyn's classic 60s/70s albums have been reissued by *Island* (through *PolyGram*). Martyn appears at this year's *Fleash Festival*, Finsbury Park, London on 6 June.

Martyn at London's Town & Country Club, 1995



PHOTO: PAUL HILL/OUT

invisible jukebox



Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of

Jesus And Mary Chain

Tested by Mike Barnes

In 1984 The Jesus And Mary Chain released their debut single, "Upside Down", and with it a warning that something explosive was about to land in the effete indie scene of the time. The group was formed in East Kilbride by the Reid brothers, singer/guitarist Jim and guitarist William. With an all-purpose rock 'n' roll attitude, they soon achieved notoriety with live shows that were regularly accompanied by riots — or at least fights. More importantly, their incendiary and hugely influential debut album *Psychocandy* was released towards the end of 1985. On it the group took elements from The Ramones, The Velvet Underground and The Beach Boys and mixed them in a cauldron of guitar noise. The group changed tack radically for the bleak *Corklands* (1987), and their subsequent records have varied the mood from acoustic ballads to ultra-aggressive rock. The new album, *Munki*, has been three years in the making and emerges as an impressive reinvention of their sound, full of minimal, futuristic rock 'n' roll. The Jukebox took place in the offices of Creston Records in London. Present were Jim Reid and the group's guitarist of ten years, Ben Lume (who regularly disappeared from the room on group business). William Reid had decided not to give interviews. "He's not giving much at the moment," was his younger brother's cryptic explanation. The two were initially wary of the Jukebox format, admitting they were expecting to be played a lot of "shit", but soon got to grips with the selections.



JOSEF K
"Endless Soul" from
Young And Stupid
(Supreme International
Editions)

Ben Lume: Sounds like BOB
indie

Jim Reid: Is that Ian

Mc Culloch's voice?

No, but it's one of his contemporaries.

JR: To be honest with you, it's got a lot of the elements of music that I can't stand. That drumbeat sounds like someone flicking a piece of paper. "Let's make a record that sounds like we don't have a girlfriend and there's no chance of us getting one."

They were a Scottish group.

JR: [Puzzled] A Scottish band? They have to be Josef K, then. That's a shame, because I quite like Josef K, but I don't like this. I've never heard this. What's it called?

"Endless Soul". It was originally on the *NME* CRT tape and ended up on a compilation album *Young And Stupid* that came out in 1989. Did you like any of the other groups on the Postcard label?

JR I loved Orange Juice, they were great, fantastic. I have to say that I hated indie music, but I think that the Postcard scene was generally separate from the indie scene — people with big ideas rather than small ideas. It was pretty important in that I always felt Scotland was completely separate musically. It was a place where you couldn't get a band off the ground, somehow there was no musical talent up there. I'd never been into anybody who was Scottish who made music before, except for Alex Harvey or something like that. Then a cool band called Orange Juice came out and I thought, Fucking hell, I can stop pretending I'm not Scottish now.

Did any of those Scottish groups influence The Jesus And Mary Chain?

JR Maybe not directly. The sources were similar probably. I think Orange Juice probably drew our attention a bit more to the Velvet Underground, so we went back and figured where they were coming from.

When did you start operating as a group?

JR It was always this group that was being talked about that never existed. We would sit around going, "Well, we've bought a guitar, it looks good... what are we going to do with it? We'll get a band together." It got talked about for years and years. Our Dad went, "You layabouts are going to have to do something, I'm going to kick you out." So that was that. It was about 1983 when it became real, when we actually started to write songs. We'd make demos — basically *Psychocandy* in demo form — and send them away to just about any record label in the country — none of them gave us a deal. Then we done some gigs and it all took off. BL It was rejected by Blanco Y Negro [who later signed the group].

JR It was funny, because all the people who had rejected us came to our gigs and offered us loads of money [saying], "We've been looking for a band like this for years."

MY BLOODY VALENTINE
"To He Knows When" from Tremolo EP
(Creation)

JR I know what this is. I think it might be The Cocteau Twins. No, it's the Valentines. The reason I thought it was The Cocteau Twins is because the start of their track "Lorelei" sounds like that. Great record. This reminds me of Ecstasy. I remember when I first heard this was on about my fourth E and I thought, "This record sounds weird. I bought it about a week later and thought, 'Stii does [Laughs] I could have saved myself a lot of money, just bought this record and not bought the E. I went to see them at ULLU [the University of London Union] in 1990, or something like that. I saw them at the Britten Academy in 1991 and it was so loud I felt physically ill."

BL I quite liked that, but probably I'm deaf anyway. I think they were shooting themselves in the foot because at times even their fans couldn't stand it any more. JR Their things were rattling around and popping out. I like music when it's that loud. I remember that track ["You Made Me Realise"] which they used to build up and do that ten minute noise section. It was like torture

To me it was great. Music can't be too loud as far as I'm concerned.

I saw them in their early days in 1987 and they came over as blatant Jesus And Mary Chain copyists. Were you aware of them then?

JR Yeah, and I think to be honest, that's what they were at that time. They well and truly shook that off, got their own sound and their own identity. I don't think they would deny it or consider it an insult to say that's what they were in 1987.

BL When you first hear it the mix sounds all wrong, but it's a very sophisticated sound.

JR In the business we're in too many people go down well worn paths. It's hard to come by bands who stray off the beaten path — they're certainly one of those Hat off [sic] to Kevin Shields and the rest of the band — they're innovators.

It's strange how they disappeared so completely.

They've only released a few tracks in the last six years. JR There's this album that's so good, it doesn't exist. Kevin doesn't even use recording equipment anymore. It's spiritual, it's beyond physical. Basically he's not been doing anything for a long time. I think they did completely disintegrate, but from what I hear the members are coming back together again. I think the trouble is that Kevin probably feels he's got a lot to live up to, which is true. But I think he's also got a bit of a studio phobia. I know what that feels like. You think, OK, what do I do for a living? I make music. But I hate hanging around recording studios. He's got a reputation for being a bit of a studio whizz kid. I think if that was true he would be in the studio all the time making records.

THE BUTTHOLE SURFERS
"Something" from Pinhead (Capitol)

The original plan was to play this last so I could make a quick getaway in case you were offended, but I'll play it now anyway.

BL What is it? Phil Collins?

[The track, a very accurate pastiche of Jesus And Mary Chain's "Never Understand" single begins].

JR I've heard this.

BL I know who it is. The Butthole Surfers. I like it, it's quite amusing. They're just having a bit of fun. I hope they enjoyed making it.

JR Maybe they don't remember making it. Funnily enough, I met them a few times. We were on Lollapalooza [together]. The singer, Gibby — what a strange bloke. I don't know what drugs he was on but I'm glad I never had them. He came into our dressing room and went [Jim puts on a slurred voice], "Urth, my name's Gibby." He was talking like [Jim makes incoherent speech sounds], then he disappeared into the latrine and came back out and the makes more incoherent sounds. Then he fell off his chair and started rolling around. We thought, 'Shall we call a doctor?' It was OK. Funny guy.

We played a gig with them in 1985. Bizarre bill. Santa Monica Civic Centre. It was us, The Butthole Surfers and Specimen [a bunch of notoriously dodgy Gods]. We got

there and saw Specimen were on the bill and we said, "What's going on? It can't happen, you're supposed to tell us." They were friends of the promoters or something. I wanted to kill the fuckers as well. It was a Halloween gig and Specimen were throwing eggs around the stage. I walked on stage, sucking in my cheeks, as you do. I've got my high-heel shoes on and all of that. I go [he mimics a typical rock 'n' roll microphone pose] and the stage is all sloppy and I go flat on my arse. It was terrible.

[The Butthole Surfers] was almost a different band every couple of years. I saw them at the Clarendon [in London] a couple of years later. Then I saw them at ULLU a few years after that. By the time they got to ULLU they were more professional, less chaotic. They were using films on stage, disturbing images.

BL I saw them at Brinton one night. I'd taken acid. I was looking at the films, thinking, 'That looks very normal. We couldn't resist playing you that track.' [Jim starts singing "Never Understand"] It's a good wee tune.

GENE GRAY & THE STINGRAYS
"Surfer's Mood" from East Side Sound (Dionysus)
JR Link Wray

It isn't, but it's a blatant steal from "Rumble".

JR This isn't Link Wray?

BL They've stolen all his licks.

JR Generally I love this music. I'd love to have a time machine and go back to 1958, to see a woman take her clothes off on stage while the band are all [he adopts a staid, grumpy playing pose]. To me this is what this music's all about.

This is Gene Gray And The Stingrays from 1963. I assume that you all like this kind of surf guitar?

JR We're all into The Cramps and I guess Link Wray is the granddaddy of them all. [Quietly] Trash. It's great that Americans can use words like "trash" like that. Can you imagine if there was a genre of music in England that was called "Rubbish"?

So was it through listening to The Cramps that you got into 50s and 60s surf music and rock 'n' roll?

Probably. When I heard The Cramps I remember that I was aware that they hadn't invented it. When I was really young I remember Link Wray on The [Old Grey] Whistle Test. I wondered who all these old guys were. One of them looked like he'd died about five years ago and somebody had stuck a guitar on him. I love Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent, nothing too out of the mainstream. I love Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry as well, he was a genius.

Did you hear *Indie Child*, the album that Link Wray made for Creation a few years ago?

I heard it once. I wasn't particularly gone on it. The production was too modern, too updated, which was never relevant when it comes to Link Wray.

HIGH RISE
"Ikon" from Tokyo Flashback 4 (PSF)

JR It sounds a lot like Pussy Galore. Seems like The Velvet Underground with Jim Hendrix on guitar.

invisible jukebox

BL With a bit of [MC5's] "Kick Out The Jams" going on in the background as well I like it

It's a Japanese group called High Rise.

BL This is great because we're doing a load of Japanese interviews tomorrow "My pick is High Rise" [He makes a note of the name] We should get these guys to support us when we go over there

JR They'd blow us off stage. What year are we talking here?

1995.

JR This is punk rock, man, definitely. This is the kind of music that I like to

BL Take drugs to

JR No, no, quite the reverse I put my slippers on in the evening, get my little cat to sit on the arm of the chair, and kick back [Laughs] Truthfully, This is great

After Psychoacousty you could have gone further into experimenting with noise, but instead you seemed to back off from it a bit.

JR We did. Psychoacousty was crazy. Everybody was talking about everything but the songs, almost. They were either talking about gigs where there were riots or where somebody might have thrown up in public, or the guitars are so extreme. We thought: All those things are true, but let's go away and make an album that has no feedback and no noise and is just about songs. The feedback and noise and the trashy thing was on the back burner. We've dabbled with that.

What prompted you to go for such an extreme sound on that album?

JR We used to listen to a lot of G6s stuff, the trashier side of the Stones, Thirteenth Floor Elevators and all that. We thought this is the kind of music that we want to make but to take it to another level. Why don't people just shove the guitar up? Why don't you let the fuzzbox do the talking? It was quite fortunate because none of us could play that well!

What about the riots at your gigs? Were you being deliberately confrontational?

JR To be honest with you, it came out of my complete inexperience in the music business, selfishness and drunkenness. A lot of people blamed it on the fact that we did really short sets, but nobody really cared about that. We'd never played a gig until the May Chain and we didn't realise that we had to go on at a specific time and people who'd actually come to see you didn't want to stand there [waiting on you]. There'd be people coming in [to the dressing room] going, "You're on in five minutes," and we were going, "Who the fuck are you?" Can't you see we're drinking? We're on when we feel good! And suddenly it would be an hour and a half after the time that people were expecting us. We'd stumble out there and go [blurr]! That you're pleased to see us! It was complete drunken inexperience stupidity, basically. I'd like to say it was masterminded, but I'm certainly not that clever.

LOVE

"Your Mind And We Belong Together" from Love Comes In Colours (Raven)

JR I don't know what album this is, but this is Love

It's got to be on Forever Changes

This was a B-side of a single recorded just after Forever Changes, but it was withdrawn.

JR Love were a really weird group. They didn't know what they wanted to be so they would do something like "Seven And Seven Is", which is sort of garage trash, and something like this, which is sort of sweet and mellow. I gather they were all a bit [He makes whooping sounds to indicate 'mental instability'] That guitar's brilliant. What's Arthur Lee doing now?

The last time I heard he was in jail on a firearms charge.

JR One of the reasons that I love going to LA — I've never met Arthur Lee — is that you do tend to bump into strange ghosts from the 60s. We met Sky [Saxon, as in Sky Saxon & The Seeds] and he looks like a wino, like he's sleeping in doorways, this old guy with filthy clothes on. He's coming to see us, going [He adopts a loud, raw voice] "Can I come on stage with ya?" I go, "Sky — you feel stupid calling a guy 'Sky' — 'I don't think it's good idea', and he's going, "What am I going to do?" And I'm going, "Sky, you're a fucking star in Britain. Try and get a gig in Britain, people will love you there." He did, except he didn't come, because he sold six tickets. He was going to play at ULU and it never happened because no one was interested. I thought people would be interested. I did feel really bad, because he looks like a man who's got his problems.



LOU REED

"The Blue Mask" from The Blue Mask (RCA)

JR It's not familiar. Roxy Music? Oh, this is Lou. BL [Re-entering the room] Is this Dream Syndicate? Sounds like Steve Wynn

JR We've established that it's Lou Reed. Must be from Street Hassle?

It's just after that. This is the title track from The Blue Mask, from 1982.

JR I'd gone off Lou by then. He'd lost his way. I think I think he didn't know what was good about himself. This is like session men trying to make a noise record.

What do you think about his more recent stuff?

JR It's not my cup of tea, but whatever. Round about this time he was going through the motions. At least nowadays he's sincere about it, which is all you can ask of anybody.

BL [After a particularly fraught bit of singing and guitar] Calm down a bit. Very Neil Young-type guitar.

Did you go to see The Velvet Underground when they reformed?

JR Again, it's not my cup of tea. The Velvet Underground were my cup of tea when they were a band, but The Velvet Underground 1990s-style is not what was good about them. The Velvet Underground were about youth and fun and enthusiasm. The thing that drifted on down to Kenish Town a few years ago, I couldn't be bothered to walk down the street and see them. But then that was my

decision. I don't hold it against them that they got back together, there was just nothing in it for me.



FM EINHEIT/ CASPAR BRÖTZMANN

"Nizzary" from Merry Christmas (Blast First)
JR Let's go out on a good one. [After a while] It's got to be Einstrände

Neubauten

Pretty close. It's FM Einheit from Neubauten, getting his power took out. The guitarist is Caspar Brötzmann.
JR I've heard his name. I can't really tell you much about him. I like this, this is good. I was a bit of a Neubauten fan myself. What year is it?

1995.

Well, that's good, because old Blixa [Bargeld's] lost the plot, man.

I thought that Neubauten's recent music was really good.

Don't you like it at all?

JR No way, man. There's one video I've seen on TV, I must admit it was a few years ago, probably about the time of this. It was the most pretentious piece of shit I've ever seen in my life. I think it was released as Neubauten but it was Blixa dancing around some woman on a pedestal or something like that. The music was so dreary and uninteresting that I cannot even begin to tell you how much I hated it.

[Referring to the track] That's what I liked about Neubauten — Neubauten was all about taking music, and sawing it in half and chopping it into a quarter and throwing it up the air and saying to people, 'Look, I bet you didn't realise you could do this with a road drill and an old refrigerator.' [Laughs] It was great.

What about other groups from that area, the Industrial noise corps?

JR Test Department were a bit too po-faced. I like it sonically, but I hate the way that nobody seems to have a sense of humour, nobody ever seems to have smiled who has made any of those records. The music is hard to take on board for someone who's not into noise music, and then on top of that you've got a bleak, depressing sleeve, depressing titles, depressing vocals, depressing video. Why can't you have that kind of mental noise with a Beach Boys song or something? Well you can. It's The Jesus And Mary Chain.

Did you see Einstrände Neubauten live?

JR At ULU in 1985. It was good, but then again, the people there were too reverential about 'Art'. Anybody who makes a record that's worthwhile gives you a little glimpse into different areas of their personality, aspects of what they're about. I learned that lesson from The Velvet Underground, and as you were saying earlier on about Love. With bands like Neubauten, it's like heavy Metal music. It's one narrow area of what a person might be about. It's funny how I started off saying I really like Neubauten and I've ended up completely trouncing them. [Laughs] It's out now on Creation [through Wool].

ENO

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immaculate consumption

"In America," declares Richie Hawtin, who lives just a ten minute drive outside the Land of the Free over the Canadian border in Windsor, Ontario, "you can get everything. Ten types of this or that. 24 hours a day, even if you don't need it. You go to restaurants and they'll have these specials on for 20 cents you'll get double. You don't even need it. People just consume what they're told. This mentality of 'more is always better' — I'm not that type of person when it comes to what I like, musically, or artistically, or socially."

If the United States has become fattened on a surfeit of channel- and burger-grazing, Richie Hawtin is here to perform a little liposuction. His new Plastikman album *Consumed* finds him shaving off every last ornamental frill from his distinctive brand of laser-sharp Electronica, which as anyone exposed to previous Plastikman records from 1993's *Sheet One* onwards will know, was hardly a paradigm of blubbery excess in the first place.

America's consumption grows ever more conspicuous, highlighted by its uncompromising stance towards global reduction of pollution levels, and attempts to broker a few more years of unrestrained gas-huffing by buying up Third World emission quotas — deals which neatly stave the growth of potential economic riots. "It gets worse and worse," complains Hawtin. "Americans are pushing their ideas out to every corner of the planet now. With every McDonalds, somewhere, it's like a chip away at individuality."

Hawtin's commitment to streamlining was announced on his 1995 LP, *Musik Hold* a magnifying glass to the back cover, and there it is, a legend in bubbletext: "Just because you like chocolate cake doesn't mean that you eat it everyday."

If his obsession with subtraction, reduction and minimalism sounds faintly Puritanical, remember that Richie Hawtin has literally followed the pilgrim route. When he was nine, his family migrated from Banbury, England, to Windsor, Canada, just across the border from Detroit. His father, a robotics engineer in the car industry, had found a new job at the Motor City's huge General Motors plant. His father's occupation meant that there was always "technological stuff" around the house. "He spent weeks working on this home computer in the 70s, and he threw it across the room and it smashed into pieces, 'cause he was so frustrated with it. And he always had high-end stereo things."

Hawtin used to lay his tracks down in the middle of the night in the basement of his parents' home, forcing them to sleep with earplugs. Then he bought a disused fire station in Windsor, which he converted into a secure unit from which he could multi-task to his heart's content: recording and promoting, running the Plus 8 and, more recently, M-nus labels, and giving workspace to his graphic designer brother and photographer girlfriend. He's got a denizen of the digital night, as he explains, digesting a huge Indonesian meal in the lobby of an Amsterdam hotel. Now eternally in demand and shamefully hyperactive as a live performer and DJ (like Jeff Mills, he's honed the two activities into a single, indivisible discipline), he reckons to have permanently transcended jetlag because he spends so much time in transit. Indeed, two hours after our interview winds up at around 2am, he's rocking out in the industrial zone of North Amsterdam, in the shadow of a former gasworks.

"It's definitely fucked me up," he chuckles. "I think [the music's] still there to fuck you up — maybe it's a little more subtle now. But it's still coming from me. It's



In his Plastikman guise, **Richie Hawtin** used to bomb the dancefloor with bullet-hard Techno. Now he seeks solace and inspiration in the minimal artwork of Anish Kapoor and Mark Rothko. Words: Rob Young. Photography: Eva Vermandel

about pushing that envelope, and testing someone, I've always preferred hitting people from behind with something instead of right over the head. I sneak up on them — dirty technique."

Two words crop up repeatedly, on *Consumed* and in Hawtin's conversation: "Contain" and "Consume." Those are the first two cuts on the record; the album, furthermore, is "created and contained by Richie Hawtin." What particular resonance do those words hold for him? "I'm just waiting for the closed-minded individual to say, 'Aie, Hawtin wants to consume more!'" he says by way of introduction. Consumption can refer to both marketplace overkill, and absorption in the huge voids his music opens up. "I'm really down to the bare essentials on this album, and I think for a lot of people, it may be a little hard to get into and accept. But if you do, and you get over that threshold of worrying about what's there and what isn't there, you really can be consumed and drawn into that world which the album creates."

Consumed is Hawtin's Black Album. Unlike the bright, surgical whites and reds of his previous two Plastikman LPs, this package is solid black, with a cut-out front revealing an inner layer of deep, recessed blue. This embodies Hawtin's concept of "containment": "One of the basic ideas of the whole album, my music of late, has really got to the idea of being as much about music as it is about science, about space, about noise. And the absence of sound, I refer to it as a void. It's a window into this space. It's never-ending, you don't know how big it is. The word is portrayed in the album cover: this package could contain a lot more space, a lot more dimensions, than it actually physically looks like. If you could actually climb through this opening, and get into this — I usually refer to it as a potential space — what you're hearing is



something which could be contained in that place. You never know, maybe you're in this space, how much sound is contained, and where the actual dimensions of that container end or start."

The design format of *Consumed* contains an explicit visual reference to the art of British sculptor Anish Kapoor, recently given a retrospective at London's Hayward Gallery. As a colleague remarked, Kapoor's forms "look like Teflon." Smooth and scalloped roundels and wormholes moulded from metal or plastics, however as if in the process of being sucked out of the room they are standing in by some powerful hidden vortex. Disorientation is the key: Kapoor prizes "illusory" materials such as stainless steel for the way its polished reflectiveness seems to "disappear" as you move in relation to it. Not gigantic in themselves, the alchemy of colour and light blots out the edges, leading to an immersion in colour that leaves you cross-eyed: it's *trompe l'oeil*, tricking the being itself.

Hawtin maintains a keen interest in the state of contemporary visual art and installations, and has even begun to collect it. His brother Martin is a working artist, and he plans to incorporate a strong visual element into future live shows. At the launch party for *Consumed*, held in Detroit in early May, he installed laser-controlled sound and light shows, including Simon, "an octophonic audio-visual performance", and "other technologies to alter participants' sense of direction and location". Above all, studying the art Hawtin admires has inspired him to "stretch things down and keep enough for you and the listener. It definitely helped me to take things even more. The last two years I've been going to more galleries, getting off some of the early [experimental] paintings from the New York School: Barnett Newman, abstract stuff like

Rothko, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Rauschenberg. I'm not sure there's a tie-in from their end, but there's a tie-in from my end! If you go into the Rothko room at the Tate Gallery, think of it as 'consumed'."

There's another parallel, notes Hawtin, between gesture-based minimalist painting and his limits-in approach to sound processing. "There's a really interesting artist from London, Jason Martin. He uses one plain canvas and uses different brushes. Just gets a real thick red and brushes with one sweep. You get this feeling coming through more spontaneously because it's only one colour, it's only one pass, but you can see there's movement because of the way he paints it. That's really like some of the music: there could be this one pure tone,

which could be really boring, but with the right kind of adjustment from the beginning to the end of that tone, it takes on a life of its own. My album is pure tones, gone through slight sweeps, and those sweeps can interact with effects, that again interact with each other. When you hear a good piece of music, you can listen to it 1000 times, but when you see a good piece of art, you can stare at it forever."

Mixed on "really big speakers", *Consumed* is a record for a large PA rig or a set of headphones only — its peculiar dynamics don't seem to work on domestic systems. Laden with synthetic textures, the Plastikman has fashioned an anti-gravitational, airless headzone where sounds, beats and velocities have changed their conventional, expected weights. Like Anish Kapoor's Dreamtime, the fused limestone chunks wrapped in blue felt, which in their transformed state are light enough to float off the floor — your attention is thrust towards the object's

“From the music I make, to the food I eat, to the way I travel, I am very specific about what I want. No bullshit, just go”

of Hawtin's sounds — it is the texture itself that defines the listening experience.

Hawtin tells a story to illustrate how his time-tuned perceptions can feed directly into the music. It happened on a camping trip last summer, in the middle of the bluest night he can remember. "You could hear a weed sound, you could hear birds. But they didn't sound like birds, because they were reverberating from different places. It was just before dawn, still dark, and you didn't know whether they were from the left or the right. You didn't know if there was a tree in front of you, or if your friend was standing next to you. You could hear slight rustles, but it was totally alien. Not spacey, just unknown. You had no depth perception. If you didn't feel the ground under you, you could have been anywhere. It was like you were in space. And I don't mean 'outer space'."

"I don't know how other people picture their music, but the kind of music and records and tracks that have always influenced me are always things that I feel if I could get physically inside the speaker, or onto the grooves of the record, there would be this massive space. There wouldn't be a clutter. I wouldn't feel paranoid or claustrophobic. That's exactly where my music's coming from."

As with the materials usually associated with fetishism, Hawtin's textures squeak and twinge over the skin. "There is a beauty to a lot of the 'fetish' materials like rubber, plastic, latex, brushed metal and so on," Hawtin says. "They all can be sensual and beautiful as well as hard and vulgar." The best Plastikman tracks are needing "Convulse," a highlight from the new album, is a kind of aural frottage-torture, as if a pair of slinky insect feelers have been implanted inside your frontal lobes and are trying to burrow out. Hawtin likes this description. "Generally the tracks I've liked that I've done haven't always been the most comfortable. I've always tried to walk this line where there's this comfortable uneasiness. I don't think I necessarily record stuff to dance to any more. There are things which are there to scrape at the inside of your skull. It is still heady music, but that sounds too trappy. I don't think my music's nice. It's like, you're invited in, you welcome the invitation, and then you're like, 'Did he just close the door and lock it?'"

Hawtin's prime motivating sounds in recent years

have been the crisp, rubber-stamping bump 'n' click emanating from German labels such as Mike Ink's Studio 11/Prolon, or the Basic Channel/Chain Reaction axis. Those sounds are embedded in the experimental, low-key series of 12"s which Hawtin sneaked out once a month during 1996, under the name Concept, and which have just been compiled together on a CD on M-nus (the imprint he currently presides over while Plus 8 lies "in cold storage"). The Concept singles, he confirms, were effectively an R&D exercise conducted in public, to help him work his chops up to the next level. "I'd do these Concept series as the new Plastikman album it would have been over everyone's head," he fathoms. "I'd had the idea about two years previously, about doing this cycle where you could step back later and really see kind of development, some kind of continuity. It allowed me to throw all I'd ever done away, and do something limited where I didn't have to do dance tracks, I didn't have to care. I could be as up my ass as I wanted, or as experimental as I wanted. I knew the new Plastikman album wouldn't come until I'd finished it."

"Mike Ink and I have this really strange rapport," he observes. "When we first met he used to do some amazingly lacking Acid tracks — that's really what made him. And what made me? The same." Like Hawtin, [Ink] really did a good job of bringing Acid music and 303s into this really sparse, abstract, minimal stuff. I think the Germans were always capable of looking at it as a science, and the Detroit school was always more emotional."

Perhaps it's this perceived "emotionalism" that's caused the spirit of resistance that drives Detroit Techno's founding luminaries — Underground Resistance, Jeff Mills, "Mad Mike Banks, et al. — to be downplayed in media accounts of the city's musical innovators. What's Hawtin's view of the metropolis where early DJ sets by the likes of Mills, Derrick May, and Kevin Saunderson used to make him turn to his friend John Acquaviva and marvel, "Is that good? Is that bad? What the fuck just happened?" That

city is stripped down to the bare essentials," he says with force. "The people who are left have an amazing passion about that city. I have a passion about that city. They feel for it, they respect it, and I have a lot of respect for the people who stay there. Detroit's always been onto itself and I've found that some of the people in that scene have made some amazing developments in music, and then they've either stopped, or just continued making similar stuff. And it seems now that some of the interesting people from Detroit are taking the Detroit sound and twisting it again, and that's what I always try to do."

In the early stages of his career, Plastikman's brutalising, repetitive beats fired a stream of dum-dum bullets aimed at the dancefloor, with devastating results. But Consumed's introspective, the rhythms decelerating towards stars, often recorded so low as to be audible, heading into the dark interior with restless passages and the occasional singular rumbling explosion. "You've really got to want to get in there and experience the sounds," he says, "climb in there with the music and the beats, get between them and see what's going on, and appreciate how much space is there."

Implicit in the way both the music has turned inward and M-nus has, for the time being, cancelled out Plus 8, is the unspoken acknowledgement that dance music is in a cooling off period. Club spaces are now in a more confined, self-contained state than they have been for some years. In the UK, outdoor events lucky enough to be granted a license are finding the electronic tribe dwindling. This year, big dance festivals are suffering. Universe cancelled, Creamfields failing to attract more than half its projected 40,000 audience. The crowds are dispersing, no doubt embarrassed by overpriced tickets, or intrusive corporate sponsorship by the likes of Evian, Virgin Magazines and Durex.

Techno's "political" resonance has so far been contained within this dependence on actual spaces. Dance events permeate deep within urban and rural sites, sound systems have occupied and reclaimed the streets' empty warehouses, bank vaults, nuclear bunkers, farmland, pagan megaliths, cavities in the Brooklyn Bridge. Add to this the necessity of forming a chemical bond between the turbo-volume sonic frequencies and the brain's MDMA-enhanced receptors, and the obligation to be there in the club environment is sealed. Consumed takes Hawtin along the route followed by post-dancefloor electronic producers, who are less interested in stinging the process in the club environment, but still run with the "revolution in the head" factor. The focus is on recording, on transmitting more directly from the studio to your headset. In the future, the music will seek out faster routes to your nerves, flashing in packets from satellite to terminal.

Riche Hawtin is already streamlining his operation — he's a living minimalist. "M-nus is a big step in the right direction for me," he says, in combative mode. "I don't need a ton of people working for me, just a couple of people who know what they're doing. I don't necessarily need huge warehouses and offices, we basically run M-nus off one or two laptops, so we can travel anywhere, do what we need to do in my house, it's all packed in there efficiently, but not coldly. I'm taking my studio apart now that this album's done, and I want to get rid of a lot of my equipment, because I've got a lot of stuff I don't use any more. All these ideas become your lifestyle. That encompasses everything from the music I make to the music I listen to, to the food I eat, to the way I travel. I am very specific about what I want. — I want this, this is how we want it done. No bullshit, just go. With a small company we can move even faster, and it's giving the finger to the people who want that overindulgence of everything they can get their hands on."

"That's what's good about electronic music," he concludes. "It's so fast, it's so spontaneous you hear something, you take it, you twist and then go. And then suddenly you're in uncharted territory." Consumed is released this month on NovaMute (through Wot). For information about M-nus releases, call 001 519 258 6248 or e-mail x@m-nus.com. Website www.m-nus.com.





Emotion. Many write about it. More hide it. Most defer to music as the relaxer of its derailing charge, its propensity to spill over and engulf us. When anyone becomes conscious of emotional transcendence while hearing music, they are experiencing a dimensional transformation: their sense of space is redefined, realigned, reconfigured. To listen is to float, sink, swim to rise, soar, plummet. The primary erotic condition of music in this sense is to massage listeners with sensory trajectories, feelings of dynamic momentum which induce a giddiness of inexplicable power.

Musical patrons of conflicting persuasions invariably accept this prime musical effect. Equally undeniable is the apparatus that has most aptly and consistently generated the effect — the orchestra — though for vastly complex reasons. Here are just a few. Firstly, the sense of music "moving" the listener is figurative: it suggests a conflation of the geographical with the mystical, conjuring up an illusion of music's power to shift the earth and you with it. Monumentalism is required for this effect, and the grandiose, magisterial narratives, which have attracted orchestral composers for more than four centuries, exploit the obsessively. Secondly, the sonic texture of orchestral music is multiple: its density withholds the power to abstract any individual instrument's identity into an amorphous energy mass through combinations with its own kind and others. Through this "thickening" of instrumentality, the orchestra becomes a machine of controlled noise — a generator of multiplied and overloaded energies while articulating singular melodiousness. Thirdly, the orchestra is organised along matrix principles: its hive of busy bees allows for a near infinite mapping of vertical (pitch/frequency) and horizontal (harmony/timbre) variables. All orchestral music is a marker of degree — of how high, how low, with what and against what. With frightening precision, harmony is continually expressed and excreted, trapping listeners in the interlocking orchestral grid.

In short, orchestras are big and loud, their gossamer effect mystifies all means of production, and they use harmonic linguistics to control and sway the listener. No wonder people are so consistently overwhelmed by orchestral power, small wonder they are seduced into feeling "moved." Smallest wonder that film music typifies the most ruthlessly programmatic exploitation of orchestral power. Typically, in the hands of most Hollywood producer/director/composer triumvirates,

emotional

In the latest reel of his **secret history of film** the emotional power of orchestral works, from

orchestral music is narrowed, gnarled, inflated. But exceptions do exist.

In Peter Weir's *Forrest* (1993), Jeff Bridges perches on building ledges and rooftop banisters with gravity-defying impunity. Having miraculously survived an airplane crash, he feels reborn, gifted, lucky, euphoric. Throughout *Forrest*, Bridges' body hovers as if in defiance of gravity. He strikes a portrait of feeling — of someone caught in the act of feeling — as a metaphor for the act of listening, of being emotionally transcended through that act. Like the wind that seems to pivot him on an invisible ground not of our world, the soundtrack crossfades airborne fragments of Penderecki's

Polymorphia (the famous atonal passages of string sliding employed in *The Exorcist* and *The Shining*) and Henryk Górecki's *Symphony No. 3* (classical music's surprise bestseller, aka "Symphony Of Sorrowful Songs").

Penderecki and Górecki? While most films attempt to clarify their emotional tone through the blunt repetition of happy/sad dichotomies, *Forrest* is remarkable for canceling the differences between tonality and atonality, for using radically opposed musical compositions in a humanist celebration of life. The film is not schizophrenic — neither in content nor in form — and has little concern for any postmodern dissolution of meaning or erasure of grand narrative. Nor is it a 60-odd-year avant-garde rigour in the name of Romantic aestheticism. Yet through its employment of music as both marker and propeller of its emotional drive, *Forrest* manages to supplant the transcendental experience of music as a metaphor for feeling alive. The film allows us to hear the singing postivism blowing out from the collapsed debris of *Polymorphia*, and the lochynose negativity which drips upwards in the blurred beautification of *Symphony No. 3*. In effect, *Polymorphia* and *Symphony No. 3* version each other, duwzee speaking, two opposing poles reconciled as facets of a larger orchestral totality.

Of course, Weir uses *Symphony No. 3* for the film's climactic scene, but the cinematic realisation of this tonal resolution constitutes an astute and breathtaking narrative coup. The horrific crash which Bridges lived through is shown for the first time in this final sequence. *Symphony No. 3* wells up as this passage approaches. Once the flashback commences, all synchronous sound disappears. Now left with only Górecki's rising string-weights, it is as if the plane floats not on air, but music, ready to join the angels. In fact, Bridges lives in this same

ethereal dimension for the bulk of the film: the sound of music playing in his head has allowed him to defy gravity, while moving cinemagoers through its emotional impact. The scene concludes and fades to black, with Górecki's cyclical strings sailing ever upward with the scrolling credits.

The primary erotic effect of *Symphony No. 3* is that endless skyward spiral. To some degree it is gross in its beauty, its obviousness possibly accounting for its popularity. Nonetheless, its tactic of harmonic suspension is distinctive, giving a cunning twist on the pleasurable oppression of Minimalist composition (see below). The combined experience of watching the Bridges character and the film's music effect resonates strongly with John Carpenter's *Storm* (1985), which stars Bridges again, the time as an alien, and features a score by Jack Nitzsche. *Storm* is less a typical Carpenter action film, and more a love story with a deeply emotional relationship at its core: alien Jeff Bridges assumes the form of Karen Allen's recently deceased husband and they fall in love. As she helps the alien in its quest to return to its own planet, she has to continually control her yearning for her lost husband and suppress the need to connect with the generic copy Nitzsche pulls off: another of his quirky compositional coups by simulating the synthetic Minimalism of Carpenter's previous soundtracks, while infusing them with a pseudo-orchestral thickness that doesn't shy away from the film's emotional drive. In other hands this approach could result in a surfeit of emotionalist cliché (as exemplified by John Barry's *Dances With Wolves*, 1990, James Newton Howard's *Prince Of Tides*, 1991, or Jerry Goldsmith's *Powder*, 1995). But Nitzsche balances the unreality of the film's love interest (Bridges isn't even human) with an unreal sounding orchestral texture, compounded from 1001 string syntheses.

The score's central motif is a reverse cadence: two chords which rise upward only to fall back, and then rise up again. The end scene takes place in a huge crater in the middle of a desert (the proposed site for Bridges' character to rendezvous with his extraterrestrial rescuers). Karen Allen clutches him tightly as they hover in a dimensionally warped space deep inside the crater. Light is unworlly, gravity is reversed. They embrace passionately, consumed by emotion, all the while knowing the profound depth of their unrequitable love. Again, another portrait is struck of beings trapped

elsewhere, lost in the music, swirling in sound, pictured in a heightened state of listening, as the film score engulfs them and the audience both.

Storm's ability to achieve this complex dialogue between orchestral density and gravity defying weightlessness has been all but ignored by cinema history. Two films better known for achieving a complementary effect are Godfrey Reggio's *Koyaanisqatsi* (1983) and *Powaqqatsi* (1988), with music by Philip Glass. The bodies and beings stream like visceral architecture throughout both films elicit a different emotional response to the suspended Bridges: not so much symbols of the transcendental act of listening, instead they are deaf to the power of the music trumpeting around them. As innocent beings snared by the forces of "life out of balance", these people (not actors) neither react to, nor sympathise with the music in which they appear to sink. In both films, Glass's Minimalist quagmire is a deliberately excessive concoction of boom, gloom and doom. It plays with deafening density, like an orchestral machine whose every control is set to full energy level and incapable of being turned off. Far from experiencing the luxury of transcendence, the films' oppressed denizens of exploited cultures are coloured with a helplessness, courtesy of the Philip Glass music that casts them out of balance with the score.

Such a harsh and uncompromising approach to scoring has received little critical investigation. Many are understandably overwhelmed by the powerfully emotional images in *Koyaanisqatsi* and *Powaqqatsi*, but few notice Glass's tactic of contra-scoring. No slight tricking of eye melodies to suggest the frailty of human life here: instead, Glass creates dread-inducing collisions between a screaming chorus of heavenly angels, a massive ground swell of subterranean crypt organs, and enough strings to decimate the world's cat population. Patrons leave the cinema shellshocked by the music, biased as much by its incessant nature as by its volume. Here is the orchestra as a postmodern inversion of machine excess: its majesty and beauty is hyper-referenced to such full effect that it erodes its own foundations. Glass's scores to Reggio's films picture yet another site of dimensional restructuring. Like the desert crater in *Storm* and the rooftops of *Forrest*, the Reggio films abound with reconfigured zones which superbly imagine that most elusive of transcendental states: listening to music. □

PHOTOS: B. STILLS

Blackmail

music, Philip Glass meditates on how movies exploit Górecki and Penderecki, to Jack Nitzsche and Philip Glass



the primer

An occasional series in which we offer a beginner's guide to the must-have recordings of some of our favourite musicians. This month, Peter Shapiro boards the mothership with George Clinton and the legions of **P-funk** Illustration: Savage Pencil

It's safe to say that nobody has traversed the mind-body divide more audaciously than George Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic Thang. With an unhealthy interest in sci/funk (probably due to the circumstances of his origins: he was born in an outhouse in North Carolina in 1940), Clinton single-handedly obliterated centuries of Cartesian dualism by merging the alternate universes he found in effluence, conus, black radio, conspiracy theory, rotting fifth, comic books, nursery rhymes and advertising slogans with the close-harmony singing, transcendence and physicality of the gospel tradition. With his equation of headspace and dancefloor, Clinton exposed the belief that black music was only capable of expressing urges of the body as racist fallacy, or as the extraterrestrial brothers in control of Radio WERFUNK would have it, "Funk can not only move, it can remove."

Clinton was the conceptual ringleader of the P-funk circus. His ability to arrange individual instrumental voices into a carefully detailed whole aligned him with a tradition that includes Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus, Miles Davis and Sun Ra. But the Mothership would never have descended without the musicians that he was able to recruit. Clinton's funksters saw the funk everywhere they looked. Isaac Hayes aside, no one has done more for the wah-wah pedal than guitarist Eddie Hazel, or more for the Pan-Flog than Bernie Worrell. In fact, with his willingness to explore the outer limits of both technology and timbre, Worrell, along with Herbie Hancock, is the most important keyboard player American music has produced since bebop. Likewise, Bootsy Collins is the most rhythmically gifted and

inventive bassist since Jimmy Blanton, and what else needs to be said about the Horny Horns, saxophonist Maceo Parker and trombonist Fred Wesley? Like Bootsy and his guitarist brother Phelps "Catfish" Collins, Parker and Wesley jumped to the Mothership after their tenure with James Brown, and have done as much for funk as either of their bosses.

With other key members such as vocalists Mudbone Cooper, Fuzzy Haskins, Lynn Mabry and Dawn Silva, drummers Jerome Brailey and Tyrone Lampkin, bassist Boogie Mossion and guitarists Michael Hampton, Garry Shider, DeWayne McKnight and Junie Morrison, the P-funk mob skewed Sly Stone's early integrationist vision into an assertion of the black roots of rock, funk and soul. Combined with Clinton's so-fa-funkster persona

and his confidence games with racial stereotypes, their legacy is the most complete, most detailed, unique soundworld ever committed to wax.

Funkadelic

Funkadelic
(Westbound SEW010 CD)

Funkadelic

Free Your Mind... And Your Ass Will Follow
(Westbound SEW012 CD)

The Future Dr Funkenstein began his musical life as the leader of a straightforward duo-wop group called The





Parliaments in New Jersey in 1956, but the P-funk experience would only start to take shape when Clinton, hoping to sign to Motown, took the group to Detroit in the 60s. Berry Gordy passed on the group and instead signed Clinton as a songwriter/producer. But George spent most of his time moonlighting for local Motown rivals such as Revlon. Sold his and Groovesville, where, working with Andrew "Mik" Terry and Sidney Barnes as Geo-Si-Mik, he produced and wrote several Northern Soul gems for Darrell Banks. JJ Barnes and The Debonaires (featuring Telma Hopkins, who later joined Tony Orlando and Dawn — George

must have been proud!)

Though it came from nowhere, The Parliaments' 1967 Revlon single "I Wanna Testify" was the genesis of Clinton's blend of psychedelia and vocal group harmonising. Producing both Sly Stone's "Whole New Thing" and Norman Whitfield's more experimental productions for The Temptations and The Undisputed Truth, "Testify" reached the US Top 20 on the back of its present, guitar-led blueprint for soul's happy crossover success. Soon afterwards, Clinton started dropping acid,

grooving to Detroit's MC5 and digging White Panther John Sinclair's sexual liberation = political freedom smack. Inspired by Sly and Larry Graham's hard funk bottom and Hendrix's guitar freakouts, the strands of Clinton's twisted vision coalesced, while the eventual defection of James Brown's best instrumentalists gifted him with the firepower to musically realise it.

The doo-wopping Parliaments shed their suits and ties for the Afros and clappers of Parliament, and their fuzz-guitar-infested backing band became Funkadelic. Parliament signed to Holland-Dozier-Holland's Inevus label and released the first P-funk album *Osmium* (1970). Named after the heaviest metal on the periodic table (before the term Heavy Metal meant anything in music), *Osmium* set the vocacising skills of Clinton, Hopkins, Thomas, Calvin Simon and Raymond Davis against a backdrop of acid-drenched psych-outs, bagpipes and harpsichords (God only knows what Inevus's straight-faced label bosses made of it).

Perversely, Clinton really toyed with the recording conventions of soul vocal groups on his backing band's debut album. Beginning with Clinton intoning, "If you will suck my soul I will let your funky emotions", Funkadelic sounded like a composite of The Temptations and Grand Funk Railroad coughing the ashes out of their lungs as they emerged from the rubble of a Detroit race riot. Picking up a few tricks from some of Motown's more anxiety-ridden records, especially The Four Tops' "Bernadette" and Martha and The Vandellas' "Nowhere to Run", "I'll Bet You" extended the psychedelic soul blueprint of "I Wanna Testify" as far as it could go — Norman Whitfield wouldn't reach this level of paranoid intensity until his production of The Temptations' "Papa Was A Rolling Stone". The blurred, murky sound of "I'll Bet You" and "Music For My Mother", and the aggressive, sarcastic distortion of "I Got A Thing, You Got A Thing, Everybody Got A Thing" seemed to sum up the political frustrations of urban African-Americans in the face of the US government's deceitful double-dealings. To Clinton, it was clear that alternate realities offered the only hope of escaping both the physical ghetto and the ghettos of the mind. "Behold, I am Funkadelic! am not of your world! But fear me not, I will do you no harm! Loan me your funky mind so I can play with it! For nothing is good unless you play with it."

Clinton invented his most potent catchphrase on the title track of Funkadelic's other 1970 album, *Free Your Mind And Your Ass Will Follow*. By inverting the happy belief that physical liberation led to intellectual freedom, Clinton revealed the alleged "natural" physicality of black people to be a product of Norman Mailer's repressed imagination (see his preposterous Best essay *The White Negro*). Jimi Hendrix fully entered Clinton's synchysis via Eddie Hazel during the string riff and solo on "I Wanna Know If It's Good To You" and the dangling hammer-ons at the beginning of "Funky Dollar Bill". And Bernie Worrell announced

the primer

his arrival, in place of Mickey Atkins, with a series of gothic, church organ figures that sounded like the Phantom of the Opera leading the Family Stone

Funkadelic

Maggot Brain
(Westbound SEW002 CD)

I have tested the maggots in the mind of the universe and I was not offended! For I knew I had to rise above it all or drown in my own shit. Despite Clinton's repeated denials, it's rumoured that he titled the third Funkadelic album *Maggot Brain* after he found the festering corpse of his brother Robert, who had died of an overdose. Whether it was due to that traumatic incident, or Vietnam, or the grim realities of life in Detroit's ravaged Chocolate City, *Maggot Brain* was as bleak as Sly Stone's *There's A Riot Goin' On*, as washed-out as The Rolling Stones' *Dile On Main Street*, and as aggressive as Black Sabbath's *Paranoid*. The album's startling cover features a woman's head being consumed by

both her Afro and quicksand, plus liner notes from a cult called The Process Church of the Final Judgement which had links, if only in name, to Charles Manson's Church of the Final Process. If soul and funk were turning their backs on crossover success and now looking inwards, Funkadelic had its eye firmly on 'white' rock, yet produced music more attuned to the realities of black life than any of their contemporaries.

"Wars Of Armageddon" took John Lennon's tape loops into the ghetto, where storefront preachers talked nonsense while couples screamed each other out. And "Super Stupid" remains the greatest Heavy Metal song ever — "Sledgehammer rifling that put the Black in Sabbath," said Spin's Mike Rubin, although its only obvious connection to black music was the calypso sound which Warrell swiped from Sly Stone. For the title track, Clinton directed Eddie Hazel to play like his "mother had just died." The result was ten minutes of devastatingly emotive post-Hendrix guitar primal screaming. Despite Funkadelic's proximity to the worst aspects of LSD excess and 60s libertinism, even a hippy platitudes like "You & Your Folks, Me & My Folks" was saved by Clinton's unhinged imagination ("The rich got a big piece of this and that/The poor got a big piece

of roaches and that/Can you get to that?") and Warrell's astounding McCoy Tyner-ish blocks of sound. On "Can You Get To That", his first song to commingle finance and love, Clinton went some way to joining the discreet conversation that soul was having about political betrayal under the guise of breakup songs. The brightly sarcastic "Back in Our Minds" predated The O'Jays' "Backstabbars", and "Don't Call Me Brother" launched an attack on false brotherhood sentiments. These themes were taken up and writ large on Funkadelic's next album, *Amenra Eats Its Young*.

Funkadelic

Cosmo Slop
(Westbound SEW035 CD)

Where Sly, the Stones and Sabbath all lightened the mood after trawling the depths with their masterpieces, Funkadelic heightened the anger with the unbearably better *Amenra Eats Its Young*, a double album released in 1972. Cloaked in a sleeve which was a savage parody of the funky collar bill, picturing a be-fanged Statue of Liberty snacking on babies, the album satirically sniped at Funkadelic's vocal troupe contemporaries, even as the group borrowed Gamble and Huff's Philly International sound, clearly audible in Warrell's proto-Salsoul keyboard riff and Clinton's string arrangement on "A Joyful Process". *Amenra Eats Its Young* also introduced Clinton's childhood friend Garry Shider, whose vocal chops would pay dividends on 1973's *Cosmic Slop*.

On *Cosmic Slop*, Clinton channelled his lycergic visions and ghetto rage more explicitly than before. It still contained bizarre anti-war fantasies such as "March To The Witch's Castle", but songs like "You Can't Miss What You Can't Measure", complete with Motown-style basso profundo interjections, and the title track most clearly defined its mood. The latter song's tale of a mother turning tricks to feed her kids must have sounded even more startling when it was originally released. Clinton's other tales of sex and desire — "No Computer", "Nappy Dugout" and "Trash A Go-Go" — were equally bold and outlandish. And "You Can't Miss What You Can't Measure" stands as Clinton's most affectionate rewrite of both Sly Stone (that calypso sound again) and Motown conventions, particularly the masterful Smokey Robinson parody contained in the lines, "I chew my nuts off one by one/only got one to go/uhh... I get what I've been missing/Hell, I'll have no more".

Clinton's newfound obsession with sexual politics was echoed in the album's sleeve art, which was the first P-funk cover to feature Pedro Bell's teeming, multicoloured cartoons. Bell went on to provide the visual analogue of Clinton's increasingly sophisticated soundworld on the rest of Funkadelic's albums, as well as on Clinton's solo records up to 1986's *R&B*.

Skeletons In The Closet. Two other recruits would prove to be even more crucial to the development of P-funk.

Just as Funkadelic started recreating the traditions of black music in the image of the wooly Afro on Clinton's head, elsewhere two brothers were redefining the

Parliament in session





Funkadelic get down with their bad selves

nature of it) with James Brown's new group, 250 miles due south in Cincinnati. Ohio. Bassist Bootsy and guitarist Phelps Collins joined the JB's when Brown's previous group walked out in 1970 in a pay dispute. During their nine-month tenure, the Collins brothers inadvertently moved funk's focus from the loose boogaloo style to unbearably tense, precise mantras such as "Get Up (I Feel Like Being A) Sex Machine", "Super Bad" and "Get Up, Get Into It & Get Involved" that took the notion of "groove" both literally and figuratively. Unable to put up with Brown's tight ship, however, Bootsy and Catfish went back to Cincinnati where they formed their own funk troupe: The House Guests.

Clinton met with the Collins brothers soon after, and once they had agreed to join him, decided to reinstate the Parliament/funkadelic distinction. In 1973 he signed Parliament to Neil Bogart's Casablanca label, and the following year released *Up For The Down Stroke*, which updated old Parliament's material (including "I Wanna Testify"). It also contained the Collins brothers' first contribution to the Parliament/funkadelic thing, the preposterously funky "Up For The Down Stroke" which blooded the band's future groove-based direction. Meanwhile, the 1974 Funkadelic album *Stinking On The Verge Of Getting It On* followed a more rock-oriented route, especially on tracks like "Red Hot Mama" and the title cut.

Parliament Mothership Connection (Casablanca 82-4502 CD)

While Funkadelic continued to showcase Clinton's highly software vignettes on *Let's Take It To The Stage* (1975) and *Tales Of Kidd Funkadelic* (1976), he saved his most original scenarios for the Parliament albums. The title track of the group's 1975 album *Chocolate City* may be the most multi-layered, surreal and sophisticated piece of music Clinton has yet produced. Combining the hipster jive of black radio personalities with a parody of election night rallies, the song turned white stereotypes of insatiable black hypersexuality into the black power fantasy of white supremacist nightmares: the African-American electoral bloc start multiplying like rabbits. Referencing James Brown's "Night Train" and Martha And The Vandellas' "Dancing In The Street", Clinton turned the name-checking of predominantly black cities into a reading of the election results that spelled the end of the white power structure. Unfortunately, neither Clinton nor the group could sustain the inventive pace on the rest of the album.

1976's *Mothership Connection*, on the other hand, was unrelenting in its musical and conceptual genius. Conceived as the first in a series of "funk operas", and coming out of the same jam sessions that produced the basic tracks for Funkadelic's *Let's Take It To The Stage*

as well as *So (What) ... Out In Bootsy's Rubber City* (see below), *Mothership Connection* was P-funk's commercial breakthrough, with "Give Up The Funk (Tear The Roof Off The Sucker)" reaching the US Top 15. For the album, Clinton resurrected the DJ from "Chocolate City", here in the persona of Star Child, who returned to claim the Pyramids. In the *Mothership* from the "chocolate Milky Way", Gospel's deliverance would no longer be brought forth by the white cherubs of European imagination, but by chitlin'-eating, Afro-dad brothers from another planet. The sweet chance of slave-era spirituals became a spaceship offering escape from the ghetto via

"Supergroovalluciprosafunkification". In Clinton's future funk replaced religion and became the object of transgalactic crusades by "Unlucky U-Fos". "Handcuffs" was the one track that sounded out of place in the tech-gnostic revelation of the infinite, but it was also Clinton's most harrowing and bizarre expression of lover's paranoia, even if it was played for laughs.

The depth of Clinton's sci-fi fantasy was matched by the creation of an unique soundworld. Bootsy's custom-made Space Bass and Bigfoot Bralery's drums laid down an aqueous, molten low end over which Michael Hampton and Garry Shider warped in tiny gestures and with rocket-science precision. And Bernie Worrell's trademark hi-pitched synth squiggles sculpted the contours of Clinton's outer-space in sound.



Bootsy's Rubber Band

Stretchin' Out In Bootsy's Rubber Band
(Warner Bros 2920 CD)

Bootsy's Rubber Band

Abin: The Name In Bootsy Baby!
(Warner Bros 2972 CD)

Unlike label owners Berry Gordy and Sue Records' Juggy Murray, Clinton eschewed the tenets of self-sufficient black capitalism in favour of taking the record industry for all he could get. Between 1976 and 1979 the various P-funk projects (Parliament Funkadelic: Bootsy's Rubber Band, Parliament, Brides Of Funkenstein, The Horny Horns, Fuzzy Haskins, Eddie Hazel and Bernie Worrell) released 23 albums (not including the Quazar and Munky projects by refugees from the Mothership) in five different labels. While they all have enough inspired lunacy to recommend them, the best of the side project albums are Bootsy's first two records.

Referencing The Bar-Kays' "Holy Ghost", Bootsy took on the persona of Casper the bass playing ghost and became the bespectacled caped crusader for the funk. Bootsy was at once the superhero of childhood fantasies and the kinky jovanian that Clinton could never be given the constraints of collective improvisation in Parliament-Funkadelic. The grooves of Stretchin' Out's title track and "Psychotumbumpchool" and Abin's title cut and "The Phoocho Theory" ("If you fake the funk, your nose will grow") were as monothisic as anything created by the two core groups. What set Bootsy apart, however, were his utterly bizarre ballads. The ten minute psycho-sexual odyssey, complete with bass solo of Abin's "Munchies For Your Love" and Stretchin' Out's remarkable twin confessions of Eros and Thanatos, "I'd Rather Be With You" and "Vansh In Our Sleep", are as acid-soaked and scary as anything Clinton came up with in the early part of the decade.

Parliament

Funkentelechy Vs The Placebo Syndrome
(Capitol 824501 CD)

The idea of reproduction as power principle proposed on "Chocolate City" was relocated to Mothership

Clinton's sci-fi Utopia on the 1977 Parliament album *The Clones Of Dr Funkenstein*. Sounding like a spoof of Elijah Mohammed's belief that white people were created by a mad scientist named Yakut, Clinton's Dr Funkenstein created "Children Of Production" who were "Deeper than abortion/Deeper than the reason/That the Earth was flat when it was round".

Deeper still was Funkentelechy Vs The Placebo Syndrome, released later the same year, which refined Clinton's slyly facetious futurism in the successful wake of the mammoth P-funk Earth Tour, which had a previously unheard of budget of \$2.75 million in order to finance a spectacular stage show featuring descending Motherships, space pimp outfits and toy bob guns. (The tour is documented on the live double album *Parliament Live P-funk Earth Tour*)

Star Child returned for this tale of cloning and mind control as "the protector of the pleasure principle" who invades the "zone of zero funkability" in order to make Ser Nise D Vodoofunk dance and thus defeat the "Placebo Syndrome" with his "Bop Gun". "Funkentelechy" weaved an attack on advertising and commodity fetishism into this cartoon parable by introducing the notion that capitalism's "urge overkill" was "popping the funk". If the comic book scenarios, cartoon music and juvenile humour invariably obscured the messages in the songs, it was hard to ignore "Bop Gun's" reference to the civil rights struggle. "Turn me loose, we shall overcome".

The "Bop Gun" was Clinton's metaphor for the life-affirming power of dancing in the face of the pleasure-denying, sexless Puntans who still ran America 2000 years after they founded it. With Funkentelechy's closing track, "Flash Light", Clinton found a song that made his metaphor real: only a completely joyless fucker with a rump of steel could possibly deny it. By taking advantage of the Moog's capability for stacking notes on top of each other to create a gargantuan bass sound, Worrell's synth bassline became perhaps the most important musical moment of the past 20 years for the way it amplified and empowered the use of synths as rhythm machines.

Funkadelic

One Nation Under A Groove
(Charly GR100 CD)

Funkadelic

Uncle Jam Wants You
(Charly GR103 CD)

On the strength of that Worrell bassline, "Flash Light" spent three weeks atop the American R&B chart. The Funk Mob's next single, released under the Funkadelic banner, would double that success with a sentiment that was strangely out of touch with both the recessionary times and Clinton's previous work.

Beginning with a Temptations reference, "One Nation Under A Groove" proceeded to coo licks and catchphrases from Funkadelic's contemporaries in an inclusive and celebratory fashion that was miles away

from the scornful mistakes of old. The song's anthemic vibe was repeated on nearly every track of 1978's *One Nation Under A Groove*, which was the second Funkadelic album to appear on Warner Bros (the first was *Hardcore Jolies*, released earlier the same year). With songs like the disco-like title track and "Who Says A Funk Band Can't Play Rock?", the album seemed designed to prove Clinton's idea that "there is nothing that funk will not render funkable". Even more improbable was the arrival on the Mothership of the impeccably cool former Detroit Spinners vocalist Philippe Wynne, who sang on the remarkable 15 minute "Not Just Kneez Deep", which was the central track on the next Funkadelic album, *Uncle Jam Wants You*, and was dominated by another of Bernie Worrell's squelching synth basslines.

While Parliament was expending the funk opera's horizons by poking fun at the old American racist chestnut that "black people can't swim" in the underwater sex/avengerz *Motor Booty Affair* (1978), Clinton was sending a message to explore the darkest corners of his ego. Starting with the group's wet dreams of *Let's Take It To The Stage* and culminating with his fantasy of freak multitudes coming under his sway on *Uncle Jam Wants You*, Clinton seemed obsessed with the idea that he was a superior. His delusions of grandeur, combined with the two groups' impossible-to-maintain workload, legal wrangles and bizarre record company decisions, eventually took the Thing apart. Bigfoot Bailey and Glen Gons jumped ship to make albums as Quazar and Munky, while Fuzzy Haskins attempted to wrest control of the Funkadelic name from Clinton. Casablanca Records disappeared as Neil Bogart's nose. Bootsy's Rubber Band lost a suit over its name, initiated by a Country group called The Rubber Band. And Warner Bros refused to sanction Pedro Bell's phallo-rocket cover art for what would become the last Funkadelic album: 1981's *Electric Spinning Of War Babies*. Later it was alleged that the label only pressed 80,000 copies of the record, despite the previous two Funkadelic albums selling more than a million copies.

George Clinton

Computer Games
(Capitol 7562562 CD)

After the lukewarm single-entendres of what would turn out to be the last two Parliament albums, *Gloriohastopad* and *On The Tole On The Funky* (1979) and *Transublimation* (1981), and with the P-funk nomenclature in legal turmoil, Clinton managed to release a 'solo' project on Capitol in 1982. With help from Bootsy, Gary Shider, June Morrison and Bernie Worrell, the swansong for the Parliament/Funkadelic thing as a unified entity became the phenomenon's most enduring record. Although it inexplicably never made the pop chart, the second single from *Computer Games*, "Atomic Dog", was an American R&B Number One for a month, while its rhythm loop – a classic P-funk handclap appended to a backwards drum machine

— and its “Why must I feel like that? Why must I chase the cat? Nothin’ but the dog in me” refrain have remained in the language of pop music ever since.

Via Clinton’s reprisal of his proto-rap vocals, its use of video game samples, “Loopzda”’s Afrika Bambaataa-like shout (“Like planet rock we just don’t stop”), the synth leads and mechanical rhythm loops, Computer Games provided a direct link between P-funk and a new breed of funkateers including Prince, The Gap Band, Yarbrough & Peoples, John Robie and a whole generation of Hip-Hop and Electro artists whose blend of machinery and rump-shake was made possible by “Flash Light.”

Although he had intermittent, mostly critical, success after *Computer Games*, Clinton’s momentum was lost to the groups that brought the P-funk blueprint into the 80s. Despite making great groove records such as the 1983 Urban Dancefloor *Gentles* album by The P-Funk All Stars, and his 1984 follow up to *Computer Games*, *You Shouldn’t Nuff But Risk*, Clinton’s name was dirt in the music industry. The legal catastrophes seemed to follow him everywhere, and he was reduced to recording with outcasts, some inspired (his duet with Vanessa Williams, the dethroned Miss America, on *15th Skeletons in The Closet*), some dire (his duets with Thomas Dolby on

1985’s *Some Of My Best Jokes Are Friends*). Meanwhile, Bootsy had to sign over his earnings to Warner Bros. after losing the suit over the rights to the Rubber Band name and didn’t make a record under his own name from 1982 to 1988. It was during this period, however, that he fell in with the group of musicians participating in Bill Laswell’s astringent funk experiments, appearing on the most successful of these albums: Sly & Robbie’s 1987 *Rhythm Killers*.

Zillatron
Lord Of The Harvest
(Black Ark R10301 CD)

OG Funk
Out Of The Dark
(Black Ark R10303 CD)

While the G-funk of LA rappers Dr. Dre, Snoop Doggy Dogg and Warren G has kept the sound of P-funk alive, Bill Laswell is probably the only musician trying to sustain the P-funk spirit into the 90s. With his unpeened labels and repertory of musicians recording scores of albums in various permutations, Laswell has inherited Clinton’s mantle as one of the industry’s great

hucksters. P-funk alumni such as Bootsy, Bernie Worrell, Michael Hampton, Mudbone Cooper and Billy “Boss” Nelson have all recorded numerous albums for, and with, Laswell, including the explicit P-funk homage, *Axton Funk: Funkronomicon*. The most successful of these records, however, are Bootsy’s *Zillatron* album and OG Funk’s *Out Of The Dark*, both of which appeared on Laswell’s short-lived Black Ark label. *Lord Of The Harvest* placed Bootsy’s Space Bass within the inner space of Laswellian ambience, while Billy “Boss” Nelson’s OG Funk project updated Funkadelic songs like “I Wanna Know If It’s Good To You” and “You & Your Folks, Me & My Folks” (complete with the cough loop from Black Sabbath’s “Sweet Leaf”) for the 90s with raps from the likes of Melle Mel. Although none of the records made under Laswell’s auspices match the original P-funk sides for wit, intelligence or groove, they still stand as a testament to George Clinton’s enduring legacy that “All that is good is nasty.” □ Westbound releases are distributed through Aes, Casablanca through PolyGram, Warner Bros. through WEA, Chilly through Koch, Capitol through EMI, Black Ark through Rykodisc/Vital.

George Clinton (left) as Dr. Funkenstein



"One of the big dangers and pitfalls of growing up is to completely squash or eliminate the child," warns Gary Lucas. "I think the result is an ossified human being who has really lost touch with a sense of wonder." Encountering the guitarist as an adult leaves no doubt that the child inside is very much alive. Whether discussing his many and varied projects, or the music that inspires him, the former Captain Beefheart guitarist can barely contain his enthusiasms. As a nine-year-old he felt "ecstatic sensations" when he first picked up a guitar, and today he can still go "unconscious" while he's playing. For someone who experiences music as a state approaching religious ecstasy, his childhood ambition to become either a rabbi or a vampire is not so surprising. "They both seemed noble things to aspire to," Lucas remarks.

Throughout his solo career, the New York-based

the following year with his live accompaniment of the 1920s German Expressionist film, *The Golden*, based on a Jewish legend, which he still performs today.

It's ten years since Lucas played his first solo show at New York's Knitting Factory on a "date." These days, he picks his concert sets from a repertoire of around 300 pieces of original material and cover versions. His first solo recording was a take of Albert Ayler's "Ghosts," and he has subsequently performed pieces by, among others, Wagner, Bernard Herrmann, Kraftwerk, Syd Barrett, Blind Blake, Lalo Schiffrin and even Chinese pop songs from the 1940s. Ranging across such a diversity of musics, he is unquestionably a guitar virtuoso, but it's Lucas's characteristic wry humour and generosity of spirit that bind his wide-ranging choices into a coherent set.

"To me it's just an organic evolution of music that touched me and then it's come back filtered through my

myself that if I ever did anything in music it was to play with him — it was the highest thing I could aspire to as a player. So I feel lucky to have achieved that, but to be part of the whole thing was really hard work and psychologically tremendously complicated and anxiety-producing. But I'm proud of my work with him, absolutely."

The odd production job aside, Lucas more or less drifted out of music, until he was cajoled back into playing by the UK group The Woodentops (he appears on their 1988 album *Wooden Foot Cops On The Highway*). And a throwaway comment by Arthur Russell during a session with avant rapper Sinclair finally convinced him to make a comeback. "He said, 'You're really at your happiest with a guitar in your hand,'" recalls Lucas, "and I thought, right, it connects back with my youth."

Since then he's rapidly made up for lost time, recording



guitars and monsters

Former Beefheart guitarist Gary Lucas might not have fulfilled his childhood ambition to become a vampire, but in wielding his avant-roots-noise music like a stiletto, he can still draw blood. Words: Mike Barnes. Photography: Dean Belcher

guitarist has intermittently touched down in Famous Monsters of Filmland territory — indeed, his group Gods And Monsters got their name from a *Frankenstein* movie. Now, on a new CD, called *Ruby Bong Bom* and subtitled "for children of all ages", he's revisiting the Jewish culture of his childhood through a mixture of original songs, Hebrew cover versions and a "Fleschier"

a medley of Sammy Timberg's music for Max Fleischer's Popeye and Betty Boop cartoons. Aotly enough, it is released as part of the Radical Jewish Culture series on John Zorn's Tzadik label. "John has really been a terrific organiser and mover in bringing Jewish music in its various guises forward under that rubric," Lucas acknowledges.

"I've always had a love for Jewish culture," he continues. "It was brought up as a reform Jew, not tremendously religious but aware of my heritage. I'm one of the first people that I know of, out of the so-called downtown New York scene, who did music that had Jewish themes. My first solo gig in Europe in 1988, at the Berlin Jazzfest, coincided with the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht, which was the beginning of the pogroms when open session was declared on Jews in Germany. Once I'd ingested this information, I put together a piece to play at my performance and entitled it 'Verklärte Nacht' (Transfigured Night). It was a very personal statement."

Lucas continued the cultural exploration of his roots

stereotypically," he comments on his eclectic tendencies. "It's like a feedback loop. To transform the familiar to try and make something extraordinary out of it — that appeals to me. There's a blues feel to just about everything I do, even the Wagner pieces, bending the notes. And it comes out in the Chinese music. The blues spirit is very close to Jewish music, Eastern music — in fact, to most spiritual music."

"I also have an almost missionary zeal to expose some of the more obscure corners of the music that I like. It's like when I wanted to be a rabbi, I feel an urge to raise consciousness around me. This could be a very 60s phenomenon," he laughs, "but I think it's important. I've got a lot of knowledge that I've accumulated over the years and I'm just trying to give it back."

Given his seemingly insatiable appetite for music, it's difficult to comprehend that Lucas retired from playing for a while after Captain Beefheart's last Magic Band disbanded in the early 80s. Lucas had co-managed Beefheart for the last few years of his career with his first wife Ling, and had graduated from playing carnos on record and in concert with the group to become a Magic Band guitarist — just in time to play on the last Beefheart album, *Ice Cream For Crow*.

"When I left Beefheart I felt really elated and rudderless," he admits, "because my mission in life had been to work with the guy and expose the world to his genius. When I was in college and saw his first gig in New York [at Ungaretti in 1971], I made a resolution to

a number of solo albums, collaborating with the late Jeff Buckley and singer Joan Osborne (he was nominated for a songwriting Grammy for his work with the latter), and improvising with musicians like violinist Bily Bang, ex-Cecil Taylor percussionist Greg Bendian, Zorn and Japanese multi-instrumentalist Hoppy Kamiyama. His grounding in American blues, folk, R&B and the freer regions of jazz — anything with "the sound of a human struggling", as he puts it — has enabled him to operate across the musical spectrum with ease. An Anglophile as a youth, Lucas still loves English psychedelia and folk groups like The Young Tradition, as well as guitarists Bert Jansch and John Renbourn, and a musician they both influenced — Jimmy Page. One critic even dubbed him "The Anti-Page".

"Folk Roks called me John Fahey on speed, or something. Fine, but what the fuck?" he says. "I wouldn't pretend that I was a sul geniuses player, just burst out of the forehead of Athena, but I believe I'm not a prisoner of my influences, I've transcended them and created something unique to me."

"The Anti-Page thing I thought was OK, because if he was into Satan I'm certainly not in that camp, that whole Aleister Crowley bullshit," he says, obviously still amused by the epithet.

Even going by his diverse tastes, two current Lucas projects might raise eyebrows. Jet Stream Tokyo, which includes Electronica artist DJ Ruz Maskin (aka Neotropic and Small Fish With Spine) and vocalist Paul



Fredericks; and a collaboration with Future Sound Of London. The musicians were introduced to each other through Oxide Records, to whom Lucas has licensed tracks for an upcoming live EP, *Gary Lucas @ Paradiso*. He heard their music and was impressed. Indeed, Lucas reckons his sessions with FSOL have produced some of his best playing.

Blowing free over beats is not new to Lucas. He points out that he has improvised live before with Ambient DJ: The Departure Lounge Crew in New York. "That's why I knew this would work," he says, commenting on the FSOL collaboration. "I'm a kind of chameleonic player and I'm quick with the ear, so I can improvise over the music almost immediately. I'm also very interested in electronics; I carry a battery of electronic effects, most of them pretty primitive, in a suitcase. I've schlepped this thing all over the world. It weighs a ton, it's a real pain in the ass, but I'm addicted to them. I always thought it would be natural to combine my electronic stuff, my Jewish guitar music, with samples and beats."

Lucas has reached a place where his career could go in a number of directions, and he'll probably take them all at once. Among the projects he is considering is a mainly acoustic album with cello and double bass. John Zorn has invited him to record another album of Jewish themes; and meanwhile, he's contributing a wisp of "Deborahared" to a Marc Bolan tribute album for Zorn's Great Jewish Music series. Though he says he would like to improvise more in a group context, for the moment his *Gods And Monsters* are playing second fiddle to his solo work and songwriting development. "There's lots of woodshedding. It's a very solipsistic activity, but I'm kind of a loner in a way," he confesses. A recent communication from ex-Can singer Domo Suzuki could lead to a collaboration. "Domo faked me and I talked to him tentatively. If it works out we'll do something. I think he's great. He was like a shamanistic figure, for sure. There was a [Jim] Morrison vibe—in the vocals, too."

The diversity of Lucas's music lands him in folkie hangouts and clubs specialising in more avant music.

"That's the blessing and the curse of my career," he sighs. "The positive thing is that I really have the skill of the root. I know I can play blues and folk music; there with anyone and really feel it—not in an academic, studied way. On the other hand I hate to be pigeonholed, because there's the other side of me that's striving towards the outer limits of improvability."

In full-on blast mode, Lucas certainly reaches the outer limits of guitar playing. "It's like electricity when I play like that," he says. "That's my attempt at the wall of sound, trying to simultaneously plug every hole in the universe with notes on the guitar. I'm attempting to fill out the room with music made visible. The whole thing is trying to win people over, not alienate them, but still throw challenging music at them. I like something where I feel like I've been tickled with a feather or jessica with a siletto. That's what I try to do with the guitar. I try to poke people in the guts, make them feel it in the lungs, or the groin, or some area in between." *Bus Stop Born* is available now on *Twink's Radical Music Culture* series (through Cargo).

charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

DJ Spooky Synthetic Fury (Asphodel)
David Kristian/Sian Tacoma Narrows Bridge/
Someday Anywhere (AlienB)
Disinformation R&D2 (Ash International)
I-F Funding Consumer (Disko B)
Future 3 Stay With... (April)
EPY Schall Und Rauch (Sabotage)
Various Funkn(fusion) (Ninja Tune)
*Compiled by DJ Aleso and DJ Scors. Circus Maximus, Radio Arc-
En-Git, Orleans, France. E-mail: circusmaximus@wanadoo.fr*

ESP 15

David Holmes Little Short One Pt 1 (Gol Beat)
Defunkt Avoid The Funk (Hannibal)
Leroy Sibbles Garden Of Life (Trojan)
A Guy Called Gerald Anything U2 1 (Juno Box)
11 Tone Committee The Taking Of The Underground
1, 2, 3 (React)
Pulp The Is Hardcore (Swedish Erotica Mix) (Band)
Chisler Life In Losada (Soma)
The Lithium Project Mini LP (Clear)
Frederic Galliano Pils Iniris No 4 (F Comm)
Ronnie & Clyde Vs The Sons Of Silence (Leaf)
DJ Die & DJ Sav Manland (Full Cycle)
Foul Play Golden Gate (Parisian)
Thomas Barnett Ravish (Sublime)
Nucleus Song For The Bearded Lady (Vertigo)
Miles Davis Rated X (Sony)
*Compiled by DJ Aleso. Lo, ESP, Koko Bar, 11 St. Havina Court,
WCL, Saturdays 7-11pm*

At Random 15

Various Experimental & Improvised Music
From Austin, Texas (Ecstatic/Yod)
Chicago Chamber Music with Fred Anderson
FRED (Souptont)
RhB&D Paris No Gesso 10" (Gyija)
Pierre-Andre Arcand Ecrire Fat Du Brut
(DH1 Editions)
Various Touch Sampler #3 (Touch)
Ayler's Angels Never Planning (Dialect)

Metabolismus Terra Incognita (Blackjack)
Robert Ritzman Music To Sleep By (Tresor)
Otomo Yoshihide Sound Factory 1997 (Gentle Giant)
Herman Buhler/Bonnie Barnett/Fredy Studer
Earthbound (For 4 Ears)
Id battery Last Blue Before Black
(Unique Ancient Tavern)
Eve Beglarian Overstepping (100 Dcals)
Loren Mazzacane Connors Calloden Harvest
(Road Cone)
Vote Robot Vote Robot (Catsup Plate/Vegas)
Kraldursanstalten Nu Ar Det Alvor & Voodoo
Boogie (Megaphone)
*Compiled by Bill Chen. At Random, KSPC 88.7, Claremont, CA,
Saturdays, 9pm-midnight*

This Office Ambience

DJ Faust Man Or Myth? (Bomb HighPop)
Various China: Time To Listen (Ellipsis Arts)
Plastikman Consumed (NovaHute)
Lydia Lunch Matka-kamanta (Crippled Dick)
Derek Bailey Takes Fakes & Dead She Dances (Incus)
Various Doso Exotico Vt. Church Organ Works
(Sonoris)
Pete (La Roca) Sims Turkish Women At The Bath
(32 Jazz)
Max Breiman Alien To Whom? (Sublime)
Various Wadstyle (Beyongolia)
Arnon Tobin Permutation (Ninja Tune)
Swans Swans Are Dead (Young God)
Hugh Hopper 1984 (Cuneiform)
Alastair Galbraith Mirrorwork (Trance Syndicate)
Plethorahead Live On The King Biscuit Flower Hour
(King Biscuit Flower Hour)
Country Gazette World Standard (Asphodel)
Compiled by The Wire Sound System

An Alien 8 (Plus 7)

Fushitsusha Live 1991 (PSF reissue)
Aube Deglise (Did Europa Cage)
God Speed You Black Emperor
F#B# (Constel)
Bernard Parmegiani Serie Gramme (INA/GRM)
Marlin Tetreault La Nuit OÙ J'ai Dit Non (Audoview)
Amps For Christ Thorny Path (Vermiform)
Tony Conrad Early Minimalism Vol. 1
(Table Of The Elements)
Michel Chion Requiem (Ina.Grm)
Mumia Abu-Jamal Man Is The Bestard (no label)
Various Artical Memory Trace Volume Five
(Audoview)
Mazime De La Rochefoucauld Automates Ki
(Plastique)
Masonna Frequency LSD (AlienB)
John Fahey City Of Refuge (Tim/Kerr)
Christian Marclay Records (Avalistic)
Pauline Oliveros Drifworks: In The Shadow Of The
Phoenix (Big Cat)
*Compiled by Gary Worsley, AlienB Recordings, PO Box 695,
Sutton R, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2S 3L1*

Circus Maximus 15

Formers Manual Explorers, We (Or) &
Various Deutscher Funk (Caprinha)
Various Endlessnessm (Dot)
Chaos AD Buzz Caner (Rephlex)
Boards Of Canada Music Has The
Right To Children (Skam/Warp)
Kreidler Au Pair EP (KIT SM)
Super ESP Super ESP (Helix)
Various Altered States Of America (Lo Recordings)

Formers Manual

sound check

On the make: June's selected albums and 12" s

Good vibrations: Rahsaan Roland Kirk reviewed page 61



Barry Adamson

As Above So Below

3/15/94, 1116 CD

After three acclaimed and mostly instrumental albums, *As Above So Below* sees Barry Adamson finally finding his voice. Ironically, unfortunately, it isn't nearly as impressive as his other musical skills, resulting in a fascinating record defaced by one unavoidable flaw. It's not that it's a bad work, just a pretty average one, and Adamson's talents are anything but average. The music here conjures up an almost arrogant facility for conjuring up evocative textures playfully amusing reference points that slide from Nelson Riddle to Lee Perry by way of Isaac Hayes. Yet the voice too frequently intrudes, half grown and half throaty, but never quite as menacing as that combination suggests.

To add to the problem, the lyrics are over-busy full of pseudo-poetic gestures and

indirect narratives. Adamson's magpie patches of musical genres are perfectly judged, but when the lyrics try similar tricks we're left with half-baked noir voiceovers and doggy religiosity. Underlying these points, the three best tracks are almost voiceless. With a sharp eye for the critically rehabilitated Adamson covers Suzuki's "Girl," turning it into a sparse, haunting intone, bettered only by the closing pair. Goddess Of Love ("the sound of a crazed neon car crash" and "Jesus Wept"), which works up a fine head of sheer noise steam somewhere in the region of very early Pere Ubu. Even that gem is undermined, however, by a tackily redemptive ending, where a succession of soft voices saying "Welcome" are intended to counteract the scolding abuse that preceded them. It's partially reminiscent of the ending of the film *Sweet Charity*, when broken-hearted Shirley MaLaine is rescued by a vile troupe of hoppers coming "love" at her, and it makes miserable

the sad fact that *As Above So Below*, complete with a preposterous slowness by retro-trope Michael Bracewell, appears to be some sort of concept album about (oh dear!) life and death. All in all, the good things here do outweigh the bad, though purchasers should immediately junk the booties with its A-Level lyrics and average Bracewell. Then they should be able to enjoy what Adamson does best: deep, dense quasi-soundtracks that breathe with imagination and wit.

ANDY FIDDMAN

Bang On A Can

Music For Airports

10/11/93, 53647 CD

Various Artists

Chill Out

5/10/94, 1162 CD

Two oddies, connected not through the way they sound out but by the fact they both begin with an already existing album, by Brian Eno and The KLF respectively, and reshaped it again. But that is where the similarity ends. *Music For Airports* treats its original with an almost smothering reverence, painstakingly recreating the music in an attempt to give it weight, status and longevity, whereas *Chill Out* uses The KLF's album as an excuse for a series of wayward tributes and aural scams.

Since trying to out-islam The KLF is a little like a punk footballer attempting to outplay Eric Cantona, it's no surprise that *Chill Out* assembled by the Austrian collective Sublogik Communications and involving 14 artists from Europe, Japan and Canada, fails to connect its tracks vary from relatively straightforward pastiche-wash Ambient pieces to unimpressive single note drones and alarming cut-ups like Panacea's "Demolition Worker", which tries to forcefeed KLF samples into a high velocity hyper-techno interrupted only by vocals which sound like Sepultura's lead singer being tortured inside a tumble drier. If the album was conceived with the intention of turning Ambient into intone, it works, but the project has the sole taste of other people's private jokes and ends up more unimpressive and anti than Justified and Ambient.

Music For Airports, conversely, is extremely beautiful, but also somewhat dubious. Bang On A Can, a trio of New York composers/dancers, see their album as bringing Eno's music out from under its restrictive Ambient label and establishing it as a modern classic — their devastating claims — to mail the most intricate of symphonies. It's no surprise to find Philip

An A-Z of reviews:

Barry Adamson Noel

Alchote **Bang On A Can**

William S Burroughs **Chill**

Out Chris & Carla Loren

MazzaCane Connors

Damon & Naomi **Diary DJ**

Faust **Marc Ducret** Arnold

Dreyblatt **Suu's** Fushitsusha

Diamanda Galás Ben

Goldberg/John Schott/Mike

Sann **Milford Graves**

Hallelujahs **Rahsaan Roland**

Kirk La 1919 Yusef Lateef

Lithops **Gary Lucas** Maher

Shalal Hash Baz **Masada**

Robert Mazurek & The

Chicago Underground

Orchestra **Motörhead**

Nafu's Dream **Odyssey**

Ivo Perelman/William

Parker/Rashed Al **Ivo**

Perelman Trio Pluramon

The Pop Group Project

Two **Public Enemy** Pussy

Galore **Terry Riley/Pierre**

Maritan Pierre Schaeffer/

Pierre Henry **Jack Smith**

Wadada Leo Smith & Harumi

Makino Smith **Sun Ra** Talk

Talk **John Tchical & Yusef**

Komunyakaa Tone Rec

Tricky Mark-Anthony Turnage

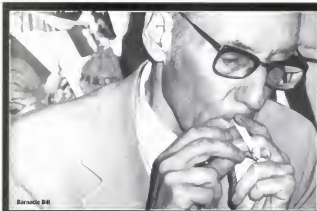
Wildstyle Wehr Little Boy

Robert Wyatt John Zorn **plus**

avant rock, critical beats,

electronica, global and jazz

releases in brief



Barnack 84

William S Burroughs
The Best Of William Burroughs

HOUSTON ALMIGHTY MERCURY 3145 36.7012/34 4000

In Tangerine's neighbourhood kids recognised him as El Hambro Invisible. No doubt William S. Burroughs enjoyed the paradox of passing from one Interzone to another, from Morocco to Mexico via the grim, grey underworlds of Paris and London, before setting into his New York bunker in the early 70s, always noosed yet somehow not there. Back in the USA, he was rapidly approaching retirement age without a pension plan, when he found his voice and took to the road in 1974. He toured regularly thereafter, until old age finally forced him to slow down, restricting his travelling to such special events as the Hamburg premiere of *Black Rider*, his opera collaboration with Tom Waits and Robert Wilson.

At his side for much of the way was his longtime friend John Giorno, a minor beat poet and one of Andy Warhol's lesser superstars, who made the bulk of WSB's spoken word recordings for his Giorno Poetry Systems label. Giorno's motives weren't

entirely altruistic, as the releases were often split side for side between himself and WSB. Regardless, Gamo amassed the extraordinary archive of mostly live recordings from which the bulk of this lovingly produced box set is compiled.

The material is organised chronologically according to writing rather than recording dates, beginning with WSB's first fiction (co-authored with Kels Elvins), the apocalyptic 1938 slot 'Twilight's Last Gleamings', and takes in extracts from *Junkie* through *Naked Lunch* and *Soft Machine*, to the late Western trilogy and his last, sentimental yet oddly affecting book of cat sketches, *The Cat Inside*.

Over three and a bit discs the emphasis is on "literary entertainments", often savage and scabrously funny routines, the performances timed to devastating effect — that is, when WSB wasn't too tipsy or being thrown off his stride by assholes whooping in advance of punchlines like they were at a hootenanny. But at his best, WSB's voice crackled like ancient parchment paper pulled from an Egyptian tomb as he delivered arcane wit and wisdoms.

Rare among writers, WSB was a consummate

performer. But then, his skills were sharpened out of necessity, in a low period back in the 50s when he was reduced to singing for sex, if not for supper, after junk withdrawal left him craving for it in South America. With neither looks nor money, all he had to offer the object of his lust was a sequence of uproariously foul routines (as documented in his first novel *Queer*).

If WSB was often content to play for laughs, they were faced with corrosive satire that scorched the scrubbed-clean face of Mom's Apple Pie America to reveal the Ugly American in his various guises: Dr. Berway, the Old Sage, the Do-Right, and on to John Stanley Hart, the "stupid vulgar son of a bitch who thought he could live Death as a company cog" (from *An Poak Is Here*). The withering accuracy of his satire was mirrored in his more documentary tracks, such as Junie's bleak 50s New York portraits of smalltime addicts and crooks feeding their habit by rolling liches.

At the very least, it's all tremendous fun. The experimental side of WSB — the cut-up winter and political linguist — is represented here by the welcome inclusion of the long delayed *Nothing Here Now But The Recordings* (first released by Throbbing Gristle's Industrial Records), featuring the set's earliest recordings, from 1959-78, of sub-vocal tape experiments, broadcast cut-ups and two extended readings, "We See The Future Through The Binoculars Of The People" and "Last Words Of Hassan Sababai", the latter brilliantly rasped in a cold, flat monotone, sounding like it was being broadcast across time from Sababai's 11th century lab by the ascetic's most zealous propagandist.

Contrary to the superficially cold serpent image his voice carried to the world, what emerges at the end of these sessions is the portrait of a (perhaps) surprisingly bighearted writer whose love of a disappearing world was manifest in the struggle to preserve its memory from the worst, the Ugly Spirit (aka the Ugly American) could do to it. WSB's own lost words are preserved — alongside somewhat intrusive pictures of his corpse — in the well illustrated accompanying bookies: "Love? What is it? Most natural can I tell what there is, LOVE."

WILDA KOPF

Like *Heart On*, much of the production is not what Bang Or A Can do to Eno is directly comparable to what Glass has been doing on Eno-era Bowie: the central musical thrust on to music conceived under the aegis of popular

The problem with this approach is, for all its post-structuralist-sounding boundaries it's nonetheless a grab-bag, fuelled by the often-purloined certain texts from the canonised western track, only to install them on minimalist Chinese pillars. So while *Music For*

...to its jewelled
...rich seductive fulness
...worth the dinner

ANDY FREDHURST

Chris & Carla

Swager, 500
Graham, Watson, and ...

Damon & Naomi

Playback Settings
P/N 0085, R1 04 38 00

Named after a vintage organ and radio machine, the release from The Wax Museum

Chris Eckman and Carla Tappin successfully combine the two to create an alternative Country with the best of both: inventiveness of post-rock. The Good News! First features Carla's voice as awesome heartbeating force over a slow, melancholy swirl. Chris Eckman's voice, in contrast, sometimes veers close to Leonard Cohen's devout tonality. The voices add it's the sound treatments that really distinguish this album: intimate crackles and slowly fermenting atmospheres characterize *Five*, the vague hum of interference shrouds *View Low*. Ends: Here nothing is surplus to us. *Unlabeled*, using analog computers, has

and *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1941) and the melodrama *Magic Hour* (1944) in his poetic and historical fiction, he gave cinema the value of classical music, but he is finally being dug out of a hole of obscurity. *Two American Sisters* (1998), set in the 1930s, is a tribute to his late, lost cause of film criticism. It is a shame that it seems to be an overrated potential. If *Beasts Promising Immortality* (1999) of The 20th-century, where Derrida's self-kindled toasts to the stark academic jungle and modernism are at the freewheeling jubilee of Big Sur's, Kansas or Eye of the Storm, echoes the intensity of *Magic Hour* with its subtly, embodied, lush effects. But overall the value lies in the

The Surf and "I'm Yours" are structurally weak, while the cover of Massie Batoli's "Awake In A Plunder" is marred by Naims jacking her vocals too high to really engage the song. These weaknesses are symptomatic of a haimistically sealed recording process — the absence of outsiders means there's no object measure by which the duo could have raised the quality of their work.

Loren Mazza/Cane Connors
A Possible Dawn
HAT NOB 017 CD

Noël Akchôte
Luzern
WINTER & WINTER 910019 CD

Marc Ducret
Six Cents/Music
SCRENN SCRENN 70005 CD

The music of Loren Mazza/Cane Connors tends to conjure up echoes of Blind Meloy Johnson's "Dark Was The Night, Cold Was The Ground," that timeless, searching masterpiece of expressive guitar playing. For Connors, as for Johnson, technique is a process of discovery in which the means must be found to meet highly personal communicative needs. Seven decades have elapsed between Johnson's dark night and A Possible Dawn, and the available means have been transformed beyond the bluesman's recognition (but a kindred spirit needs here).

Ten brief solo pieces, layered to varying degrees, but all arising from the instrument with considerable emotional charge, are followed by a massive 30-minute guitar solo. For this epic, Connors is joined by Jean-François Monette and Thurston Moore. The latter notes clearly a longed-for friend, Key-Hare (with whom Connors has duetted twice on disc). Larry Coryell's cosmicadic association with The Jazz Composers Orchestra Society and, rather less credibly, Lou Reed's Metal Machine Music in fact, while some of the shorter pieces steer far closer to blues tradition, the trio is also an expressive articulation rather than an attempt to bulldoze. Not only are the guitars dramatically distinctive in their approach to the instrument, they also manage to preserve that differentiation within the looming soundscape. The textures they generate become at times very dense, but promptly returns with the interaction of identifiable voices.

Compared to the amoral character of A Possible Dawn's finale, Luzern Corner seems almost puerile in its melodic directness and tonal ambiguity. Technique is here dedicated to post-boredom, notably in the stylish execution of four familiar pieces by Omara Portuondo. The accomplished French guitarist Akchôte teams up with Marc Ribot and Eugene Chadbourne for six duets/apex. Occasionally, Ribot's New Jersey brassiness and Chadbourne's New York quirkiness assist Akchôte's passage into more

oblique or marker quarters, but despite the concluding track, which has Chadbourne playing and singing in parodic Country mode, the dominant mood is of respectful rendition and indebted composition under Coleman's inspirational aegis.

The sleeve for Akchôte's album is graced with unapologetically discreet photographs by Tokyo anti-photographer Aoki. Such discretion is notably lacking from the cover of Marc Ducret's new CD of solo guitar. It comes from Jim Berni's obnoxious Screwgun label, and the disc's opening minutes seem to confirm that the music will match the upfront attitude. Ducret unleashes an exorbitant stream of tortured notes, reminiscent of Sonny Sharrock's wailings of splintered glass, or of Henry Kaiser's exhilaratingly shrill early recordings. Soon, however, he settles into Heavy Metal riffs which allow a version of George Harrison's "Old Brown Shoe" to veer unexpectedly into view. In spite of its intensity, all this is executed with a measured virtuosity that becomes more evident as the initial onslaught subsides, and the music grows more subtly textured and subtle. Ducret's playing is precisely, even delicately, percussive. His compositions evolve through dull rhythmic patterning towards expert variation of timbre. The agility of his performance is consistently fascinating, and his musical resourcefulness is endlessly impressive. As he switches idiom without apparent effort, broadly, the orientation leans towards rock, but infused from many other sources, adding colour to a highly attractive, superbly played recording.

JULIAN COWLEY

Djary
Got To Get In Line (By Tuesday)
DISFUNCTIONAL AD 9917 CD

Just when you thought The Fall were the only group in the biz to have left its Central to Somewhere collection behind, here's Djary (a semonym for collaboration). They are, they are, they are an aging, bald trio in a cheap suit, barking out stories about growing old and absurd in East London. The music is rock straggled to its components, a sparse and female mechanism of bangs and driven amplifier thuds. Torihiro Yamashita is the group's secret weapon, providing Japanese glamour and rhetorically propulsive beats. Her agile fingers pluck a phat dubfunk boom that hasn't been heard since Essential Logic. Slamming drums from Tony Braxido and bottle-breaking guitar from Nick Rowan complete a rocking combination.

Ornate, Plant uses a lecture. His delivery suggests a deliberant political orator who just discovered the effectiveness of pop formats. Using the rights of dialectical reason, Plant attempts to explicate the violence and poetry of his anti-social desire. Self-education leads into an aesthetic. The virtuoso rhythms of "Dary Of A Zent" mock Dylan, but each hiccup seems, provoking smiles, wincing and political reflection. "Rat" speaks for those who live off the edge of the map, concluding the CD in a crescendo of

antipathy. Gang Of Four without the howlow goos. Djary's punk violence isn't retro, it's the ground hum of the blame slump tearing up to shout in your ear. A tonic for the pissed off.

Quite correctly, Djary chose "Swerve Ticket" as a single and recorded a more poised version for the Fall Strength label. This song protests the indignities a pay-for-transport system inflicts on the penniless. It's funny, but vicious, too. Less rock's adolescent angst than objective expression of the contradiction between current mores and what might be.

DER WATSON

Suu's
Crates In Clay
BER SAU2 CD

La 1919
Giorni Felici
MATERIALI SONORI MUSIC 000004 CD

Projekt Two
Splice Creative
DISCIPLE GLOBAL POSSIBLE DISC 000201 CD

Suu's from Los Angeles started out in 1982, inspired by the free improvisations of British groups like 60s pioneers Music Improvisation Company, and experimental rockers Henry Cow. By 1984 they had become involved in the California Outside Music Association (COMA) — LA's response to Europe's late 70s Rock In Opposition (RIO). During the mid-80s they released two important avant-rock LPs, *Bel Motel* & *Domor and Elements*. After a merger with Motor Tormas Guild (LT Team), Suu's reappeared in 1994 with a new trio line-up and the brilliant *Hunger's Teeth* (ReR).

The same personnel of Sanjay Kumar, Bob Drake and founder-member David Kerman (plus electroacoustic guest Thomas Dimuzio) responded to *Crates In Clay*. Like fellow Americans David Newell, Suu's combine structural and ambient complexity with a hard-driving rock ethos. But Suu's also do serial! Drake's high tessitura vocals (usually studio-manipulated) are embedded or interwoven in the often dense instrumental layers. Not even Beefheart or Henry Cow took song based rock this far; its pointless singing out individual tracks when all else excellent, veering from epic to intricate gestures in the blink of an eye — sonically outrageous, yet short enough to be singles.

Italian duo La 1919 (Piero Chianura and Luciano Margaroni) also have aesthetic roots in RIO-style experimental rock, so much so that their previous album *Jouer. Spelen. To Play* (1994) included guest appearances by veteran British avant rockers Chris Cutler and Charles Hayward. For *Giorni Felici* they're joined by Americans Henry Kaiser, two tracks and John Oswald (live track), plus Italians Franco Fabian and Fausto Rossi. A sampled Robert Wyatt vocal course of Newel Batoli's "Who Will Outgrow?" gives "This Life" its title and begins a sequence of other samples (including Zent's sax) nearly stitched together with

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DJ Faust
Man Or Myth?

80918 HP HOP RECORDS 809181007 CD2XLP

As Boulez once observed of Messiaen, "He doesn't compose, he juxtaposes." But there is a dedicated turntable faction currently blurring the distinction between the two processes and DJ Faust (alongside Involz! Scratch Pinks and Cut Chemist) is in the vanguard. These uber-DJs eschew samplers, sequencers, effects units and the manifold ganglia of sound manipulation in favour of the traditional tools of the trade. The disc stays true to sleeve notes' bold proclamation: "Man Or Myth? was completed using only an eight track recorder, two turntables, and a beat-up MTK mixer."

Through painstaking sonic microsurgery, Faust builds up his fluid organic collages from tiny, discrete chunks of sound, knitting them together by a process so complex that it titters on the brink of alchemy.

Of course, the loopy, obsessive music is driven by the need to appeal to loopy obsessives. In a sense, this is the musical equivalent of being able to run a skateboard down a shopping centre handrail: a fiendishly difficult feat that appears utterly pointless to the uninitiated. But, at the same time, it's the sound of equipment being coaxed to the farthest reaches of its operational parameters — at times it's hard not to think of Joe Meek dangling microphones into his Holloway hallway in a bid to get just the right reverb effect. In fact, Faust goes deeper into the minutiae of technique — every echo on *Man Or Myth?* was laid on a paused tape, turn the volume down, re-record the sound, turn it down again, re-record again — and he exploits every conceivable variation on the simple physical process of needle hitting vinyl over the disc's 70 minutes. Wax topping, the banana,



Faust in the hood

crosscutting, flare scratches and wah scratches, grps and slips — they're all in here, a smorgasbord of technique for the aficionado. But it's also deliciously funny, jaucously seasoned by the ever-present has of vinyl, and pecked with smile-provoking scratches of HipHop history — Public Enemy, Eric B, DJ Premier, Jazzy Jeff, The Funky Four Plus One and more raise their heads above the constantly shifting parapet of beats and scratches. Lo-fi HipHop never sounded so far out.

CHRIS SHARP

Hogwarts' bewitched guitar. Dorian's wandering his bicycle wheel rekeyed into the title track in motion thereafter digital loops keep up the shifting cyclical momentum. As avant rock goes this is decidedly mainstream: completely constructed through a word away from the cutting edge creativity of the Sixties.

For various reasons outlined in the booklet that comes with *Space Groove*, King Crimson's "double trio" has amorously sub-divided for a number of R&B projects. Project 2, Double Trio comprising Adrian Belew, Robert Fripp and Trey Gunn, is the first with a recording. After KC's wonderful and flagging *Protonical* (1996), *Space Groove's* improvisations make few demands on the adventurous listener: more waltzing-jazz session than every-note-counts frenzy. Refreshing to hear Fripp sound like a guitarist once again, after a series of orchestral-like "soundscaping" explorations, though he produces little that's memorably penetrating here. More problematic are Gunn's guitar and guitar synth (which conjure up some worrying reminders of wapped US fusion. Belew abandons his guitar for (presumably) electronic drums, but his stiff configurations soon have one yearning for Bill Bruford's decisive power and sensitive rhythmic work.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Fushitsusha
Gold Blood

0140515 MCA 0140515 CD

Motohead

Live On The King Biscuit Flower Hour

0140515 MCA 0140515 CD

The latest live releases from the ultimate power trio represent the two approaches to organising noise and chaos — rock's dialectic between a surrender to waves of sparkling reverberation and the mastery of blinding riffage. These twin poles of madness and sex are embodied by the two flowermen: Fushitsusha's Ken Kato is the prototypical backbeated, permed genius, while Lemmy is to quaternarily rock 'n' roll that he carries alongside Esi Madsona and Fabian as a one-woman band.

Gold Blood documents Fushitsusha's appearance at San Francisco's Great American Music Hall in 1996. The show was smothered by a local radio station which accounts for the excellent sound (although compared to Hanoi's PSF releases the packaging is very shoddy). But in the search for fidelity, the record loses a bit of oomph. While the improved detail makes Hanoi's sheeks of noise shimmer more than

usual, Lemmy's "Hanoi's Gold Blood" (the title) isn't actually audible in the first one of Hanoi's intensity. A lot. Which is a pity, since because he is on top form (even his plodding white-outs of guitar fumes [soundlike like they do on his best PSF records, where "This Trembling In My Core, With Whirl Of Your Cells Couldn't I Hold Hanoi's") a real rush in turn punk ruin.

Recorded in 1983 at one of America's up-market haunts, L'Amour East in New York, *Motohead's Live On The King Biscuit Flower Hour* is the backchannel tipster to Fushitsusha's tortured guitarist immolation. As a live document, it pines next to *No Scape To Hammerman* — not just because Kato's on guitar and not Fast Eddie, but because there's no fucking fade. Nonetheless, the first four tracks are real thrashers and harness the power of chaos, where Fushitsusha dive headlong into the eye of the storm. The centerpiece is a brilliantly misty version of "Iron Horse/Born To Love" in which Lemmy sounds like a bottle of Jack Daniels as the grooves "Messed Bigger/Forcefully Strained" — not even AC/DC have come up with burn-out poetry that perfect.

Although Lemmy would probably laugh at Hanoi's self-interest the two of them should

join together: they both reduce their instruments to pure sensation machines and, as Lemmy says in the track that ends the disc, "We like a road accident in England".

PETER SHAPRO

Diamanda Galás

Malediction And Playaz
RUFF SHAMROCK CD

Nobody sings the blues like Diamanda Galás. The way she sings them the blues have nothing to do with restrictive bar counts, generic expressions of pain or coded phrases for sexual longing and release. The blues is a place Galás inhabits and makes her own when the need takes her, she'll turn any song blue, regardless of its origin.

For this recorded canon sequel to *The Singer*, she has constructed a highly idiosyncratic blues cycle ranging across Phil Ochs's "Iron Lady", Son House's "Death Letter", Johnny Green's "25 Minutes To Go" and the new standard "Gloomy Sunday". In addition she has composed piano settings, for poems by Blake/Kelvin and Plath.

In each case, her voice gravitates towards the song's outer limits and then bends back to its core, reshaping it around her own particular interest in the piece. While paying due respect to the writer/painter's performer's intentions. Not all the songs immediately seem to suit Galás's performance. On *The Supremes* "My World Is Empty Without You" for instance, her vocal leaps and skittering mood changes ornament its pop melody until so much weight is riding on it, you wonder how much more it can bear. But, counterbalanced by her skeletal piano holding true to the tune, her designs on the song clear to reveal a desiccated soul adrift in a house of heartbreak.

Galás's subject is Death, yet large her approach to it is closer to the Mexican way of courting the Reaper: lying low and lying down with him. Crawling away from the struggle, skulking him and shivering to the core the Reaper leaves Galás behind to relish another life-shrinking victory.

BIBA KOPPE

Milford Graves

Grand Unification
12404 12 7030 CD

Alongside Sunny Murray and Rashied Ali, Milford Graves is one of the mightiest links in the history of percussive-in-free music. From his earliest works with The New York Art Quartet and Gusgoop Logan, through the delirious duets with Don Pullen in 1966 to a stint with Albert Ayler in the late 60s and an album with legendary Japanese saxophonist Kaoru Abe, Graves established a massive reputation that has survived some 15 years of retirement, only recently broken by a reported bassoon session with Sonic Youth guitarist Thurston Moore and the new album. Working a homemade kit, Graves's poly-

on action has taken percussion beyond all-out sound and fury into a more deeply localized yet fantastically human tone language.

That he began as a conga player and later moved to tabla makes his mostly skin-on-skin approach to the drum kit, though he occasionally brings out the beaters to take the whole thing over the top. In contrast with Murays' cynical faling and Ali's monomaniacal snare caress, Graves's playing is more throbbing and amorphous. Though nowhere near as overtly aggressive, Graves's ashenobis resonates deeper.

Grand Unfounded is a great, rare opportunity to catch Graves alone in the studio beneath a mountain of exotic percussion. The title track alone is worth the entrance fee as he launches into a demured streetcorner rant on brain hemispheres, quantum mechanics and DNA, declaring Sun Ra's mystic sciences "bizarre" (singing to funk-breathed grooves and money-bucket cacks). Maybe it's the sound of self-built percussions that does it, but it's as if he's struck with the same American home-born aroma that pervades Harry Partch's lost pieces.

From here on, the disc barely pauses for breath. Graves's playing is dense and busy but supremely fluid, as the yodish and whips his way to wisdom, between set closes with the three minutes plus of beautifully muffled snarebeat that is "Transcendence," on which he sweetly sings over his breath.

Now here's a rarity—a solo percussion album that will bring a lump to your throat.

DAVID KIERMAN

Hallelujahs

Nikita Yto Kuranishi Chokai Wo
Tishyoo
2001 (Polygram)

Maher Shalal Hash Baz

Return Visit To Rock Music
2002 (Doxo/World Circuit)

Two wild documents from the mysterious Kanaka sense in Japan, centered on the ultra-obscure and sonically obscure Ogi label.

Ogi was founded in 1986 by Shiro Shibayama mostly as a vehicle for releases by legendary painter/painter/composer Tan Kudo and his various psychotropic entanglements. But Hallelujahs was Shibayama's own group (he now plays in Nagasaki). Originally released by Ogi in an edition of 300 copies in 1986—it was the label's first album—*New Wo* featured lush Tokyo scene luminaries as vocalists. One Mike of PSY-Che-SHOU and Neko Zaki (aka Hokokashi) turned out to be a perfect blend for the non-musically psychobabble kind of label specialists in

Densetsu being issued by the PSF label. Hallelujahs come from the copes of the musical spectrum from the likes of Musica Transonica or Fushitashia. In fact, Hallelujahs play encephalogram-stimulated and stored pop with such a heavy air of otherness they're almost an auralist God's death cross. Gates are leashed tightly, channeling like the Velvets on

"Sunday Morning" (percussion just succeeds in playing the right side of pedestrian, set every note, chord and chime is so perfectly placed that the whole album adds up to so much more than the sum of its parts). The last two tracks are beautiful evocations of a slight hallucinogenic, freefall through the early morning mist. It's impossible to put your finger on exactly where this set came from or indeed where it was aimed, but it is a beautiful and mysterious work.

Maher Shalal Hash Baz are Kudo's communal psychotic bedroom unit. Kudo has been active in the Japanese underground since the early 70s, playing in countless seminal psych units among them Che-SHOU Tokyo Suicide and the legendary Noise la duo with his wife Reiko whose Tempo LP has been reissued on Papaphysique. Three and a half years in the making, their second full-length (and under their name) *Return Visit To Rock Music* contains an incredible 83 tracks over three CDs. It's also available in an extremely small LP set with a different mix.

Maher's snare, bang and lighty bow their way through some of the most primitive yet deeply affecting schoolyard psychobabble like a collection of melioristic 12 year old shaman Hallelujahs. Shibayama handles bass, drums and "producer" (which here sounds like a matter of switching the tape recorder on and off, while a cast of Tokyo mystics, including Reiko Kudo, breathe life into peccant trumpets, saxophones and wood blocks. Kudo's songs have all the smoky mystery of halos sandwiched between delicate instruments and beautifully restrained acoustic muddies.

Return Visit To Rock Music is a unique and magical document, the sound of another musical dimension at its enigmatic best. An insouciant title CD set, it's not cheap, but it will significantly alter your life in much the same manner as any other PSF disc.

DAVID KIERMAN

Rahsaan Roland Kirk

Acas Back To Back
1992 (Jazz 1300/61402)

Yusef Lateef

The Man With The Big Front Yard
1972 (Jazz 1300/61402)

During the 60s the jazz heartland was devastated. The music's declining hold in popular culture was brushed aside for rock 'n' roll. Clubs closed and musicians scrambled for the work that was left. Many sold out, according to Rahsaan jazz fans (but I'm not), becoming jazz snobs. Gail by turning their music with rock and what was later called World Music. But the fusions of Roland Kirk and Yusef Lateef represented on these albums from 1969-76. Though they also reflected his breath, began earlier and were intrinsic to the approach of both jazz pioneers.

Both players had already achieved a measure of success. Lateef became known through his work with the funky Cornrobb

Artistry group of the early 60s. Kirk through his association with Charles Mingus. But though Lateef was credited by John Coltrane with pioneering the inclusion of World Music in jazz, and the exodus of Kirk, the blind visionary, was rooted in the jazz tradition, the conventional judgment was that there was too much of the novelty act about their output.

The tenor sax is their mainstay jazz instrument: the one where it's easiest to hear their individuality. Though maybe Lateef was at his finest on flute. Not that either of them approved of the word jazz. In 1972 Lateef disavowed the term (see *The Wire* 164). But that decision, like his earlier adoption of Islam, was common among jazz players—both Mingus and Ellington also disliked the word. By the 1990s Lateef had perhaps only left the shores of jazz—indeed, he even won a Grammy for best New Age album.

The 70s may not have been Lateef's best period, his inspiration was revitalized after a period teaching in Nigeria in the 80s. But there's fine music to be found on this 32 jazz box set, particularly *The Complete Yusef Lateef*. The album is suffused with the blues, even if not all tracks are in the 12 bar form. Played by a superb group, with Cecil McBee on bass and Roy Brooks on drums. Classic Lateef.

The other albums are more eclectic and more cluttered in their effects. *Yusef Lateef's Detroit* explores the sweetest soul string sound and has a powerful blues in "Livingston Playground", while *Hush N' Thunder* features the gospel of The JC Wides. This album in particular is a mixture of the moving and the infuriating. "Sunset" is a fine piece by pianist Kenny Barron, and like the strange, eerie "Destiny Paradoxes".

But though Lateef has top-quality players including drummers Albert Heath, Roy Brooks and Bernard Purdie, Roland Kirk has the edge on these releases. Kirk was more of a showman but a greater improviser, too. His vision of black music was all-embracing and kaleidoscopic. "Saxophone Concerto" on *Prophecy: Thylakoid To Don With A Miracle* isn't a concerto in any accepted sense, more a set of mood pieces, ranging from a kaiser waltz to free jazz, to crazy incantation but fun. Alice Coltrane joins Kirk's regular group on *Left And Right*, which suffers from a glorious string section, but has a pretty arrangement of Billy Stravinsky's "A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing", with Kirk on strings. *Rahsaan*

Rahsaan was Kirk's adopted Islamic family—features a trademark multi-form version of "Satin Doll". Even Kirk's acknowledged class, *The Inflected Tone*—had a superb jazz rhythm section and that was a continuing problem. If the standard album here is *Other Folks Music*, that's not because it has the most straightforward jazz, even here there's plenty of exotica—but because Kirk has first-rate backing including Roy Haynes on half the tracks. On the minor blues "Sinner", Haynes

beautifully enjam and inventive drumming shows why he was John Coltrane's first choice deputy for Elvin Jones. Phenomenal piano player Hilton Bat also produces some stunning work, and his composition "Animal" is a blazing modal blitz. Other Folks Music comes close to Kirk's best album of the period. The Case Of The Three-Sided Dream from 1975.

ANDY HAMILTON

Robert Mazurek & The Chicago Underground Orchestra

Playground
2002 (Wax 05501 CD)

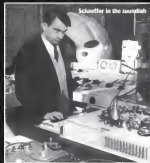
First appearances suggest this is a jazz album. It's led by Robert Mazurek, known as a hard bop cornet player and band leader, and the album is on a leading Chicago jazz label.

But the presence of Toronto's great Jeff Parker as co-composer and soloist, plus other luminaries from the Chicago-based post-rock group, tell a more complex story. If the compositional models are 60s and 70s jazz and fusion, the free-wheeling rhythmic backdrop by drummer Chad Taylor and bassist Chris Lopez, unusually low in the mix, often suggests the hyper-cool chamber funk of Toronto Current. Toronto members John Henderson and Dan Benary join up on percussion on the Herbie Hancock number "Blow Up" and trombone player Sara P-Smith has also worked with the group. Bundy K Brown, who recorded and mixed the album, is also co-Toronto.

So the Chicago Underground Orchestra is quite a turnaround for Mazurek, who I came across leading an excellent but mouth-egged hard bop group at the Glasgow Jazz Festival a few years ago. He's now one of the Toronto circle and was their last album *UFO* playing cornet. This is an unusual instrument for today's jazz, never mind post-rock, but Mazurek has found a new maturity on it. Jeff Parker is Toronto's link to AACM (the Chicago free jazz collective). He often aims for a deliberately flat effect in his solos. This was taken to an extreme on *UFO*, but it makes a refreshing change from the standard climax and transcendence.

Whatever Toronto think the spirit of John Coltrane is some way distant from their music, and that's true of most of this album also. But this is a varied set of compositions and approaches (from structured to free). The prototype of "Flamings Dancing" (by Mazurek and "Component's Dances" by Parker) is the work of trumpeter Booker Little. Eric Dolphy's associate who died aged 23 in 1961. The arrangements like Little's are quite dissonant but plangent. But the protest track is a two minute version of Ellington's "Let Sucker Vibrate", with (I think) Sara Smith on glissolenspiel. Playground marks real progress for Robert Mazurek and a striking cross fertilisation of styles.

ANDY HAMILTON



Pierre Schaeffer/Pierre Henry
L'Oeuvre Musicale

1945/GRM 1006-1009-48/CD

Electronica as we know it starts with an ozymorion, the solo symphony. Three years after he invented the method of composing using sound on tape that came to be called *musique concrète*, Pierre Schaeffer patched together his *Symphonie Pour Un Homme Seul*. The title earned a double hook: it sounded good to the existentialists of the Rive Gauche, and the nature of the piece meant that it would be played by one man, alone. The first disc in this timely, complete overview of Schaeffer's recorded music, which also includes a superb 128 page French-language document assembled by GRM's Francis Bayle, opens with remastered versions of his debut experiments from 1948 — pieces he tried to call 'les

primaires'. On the first disc, labelled *Les Incorporels* (phonobuta), the name Autrech chose for his own first LP! You can find an early version of *Choix Étudiés De Bruts*, short studies based on tapes of unmusical noise recorded at the seminal 'Concert de bruts' in Paris, 1948. After the short flush of success which the medium found after its emergence into the popular domain — via such kitsch-pop crossovers as Pierre Henry's *Messe Pour Le Temps Présent* — Schaeffer revived many of his earlier recordings. The revised versions appear on volume three of this set.

Pierre Henry is inextricably entwined with Schaeffer's music. After he joined Schaeffer as a technical assistant, the two co-created several projects after *Homme Seul*, including *Variations Sur Une Pièce Mexicaine* and *Ophélie ST*. Together they founded France's GRM (Groupe de Recherches Musicales — Musical Research Group), which endures (though without Henry) as a centre of French electroacoustic music activity (and remains more committed to public dissemination of its findings than the rival RCM). — witness these CDs.) During the 70s and 80s, Henry quite properly rescued many tapes from obscurity or destruction, restoring them and, often, in the process, creating entirely new pieces. One such is *Écho d'Ophélie*, which Henry assembled in 1988 as a tribute to his colleague, from fragments of the original material which was designed for a surrealist performance spectacle.

A complex character, Schaeffer, he valued the traditional acoustic piano as "the instrument that could do anything", and simultaneously sought to obey the laws of "the god of turntables". With the benefit of hindsight, much of this music isn't so remarkable for what it actually sounds like as for the echoes of modern music you keep hearing throughout. The

opening blast of *Symphonie Pour Un Homme Seul* cuts up a voice shouting "Ahoi there" like a Stensla TV sample, later on, a superimposition of drunken drums and alarm phone wamps prefigure the small group screams of *Musique Improvisation Company* or Cecil Taylor, while some of the early tape loop trials inevitably bring on nightmares of Paul Hardcastle and "W-n-n-n-nineteen". It's Henry who went on to make the better music, Schaeffer, perhaps realising this, titled a 1967 essay "*Musique Concrète: What Do I Know?*" It also explains why Schaeffer's recorded music has remained so out of focus until this rescue: it's just too lo-fi for a 'classical' market which is continually implored to 'think digital' — some of his *Déposition Concertina*, broadcast on Radio Paris in 1948, would make a ludgy Toscanini recording sound as pristine as an Abbey Road hi-fi demo.

Schaeffer's contribution to music outweighed his 12 years as a composer. He 'retired' from music in 1960, believing that music needed 'searchers' not 'authors'. Over the ensuing 15 years he embarked on some pretty arcane psychoacoustic research which he called *Traité des Objets Musicaux* (TOM), working only to present the 11 minutes *La Trésor Fertile*, included as a postscript here. Nevertheless, the damage was done. By sowing the means of production on behalf of musicians, his earliest dabblings with recording technologies flipped the old hierarchies on their head. And although it took almost 20 years for jazz and pop music to reach the same endowments, the effects are all around us at the time of the century. The fourth disc in this box contains a bunch of spoken word fragments from Schaeffer's talks, radio presentations and interviews right up to 1990: a dial sampling fodder.

BOB YOUNG

Nafule's Dream
Search For The Golden Dreyd
1924/CD 171118/CD

Ben Goldberg/John Schott/Mike Sarin
What Comes Before+
1924/CD 171120/CD

Gary Lucas
Bury Being Born
1924/CD 171121/CD

These three artefacts of contemporary Radical Jewish Culture from John Zorn's Tzadik label beg many questions: the most significant being: 'Whose Jewish culture is this, and just how radical is it?' At a guess, the answer to the first part of the question must be that although *Nafule's Dream* (for one, hell from Boston: it's a specifically NYC downtown avant-garde culture. To borrow someone else's phrase: New York is like Israel, a melting pot that won't melt and hence to just as diverse a mix of post-Diaspora communities. Each place

is adopt, at nurturing its own radicals, who all have their own agendas. The answer to the second section of the question isn't so easy: *Nafule's Dream's* Search For The Golden Dreyd is a klutzy-effected jazz sextet, fronted by clarinetist Gene Dickson. But there are few lame yiddishisms here: just references to and borrowings from a tradition with a strong identity. It's a fine track to appropriate such elements without lapsing into cliché: but *Nafule's Dream* usually manages it. The intriguing arrangements blend composition and improvisation fairly seamlessly, and the dissemination with Jewish tradition and its often canonicous. Many-making doesn't preclude authoritative explorations of more contemplative material.

No matter how introspective *Nafule's Dream* get they never approach the fragility of the music of Ben Goldberg and John Schott. *What Comes Before* (far removed from the usual preoccupations of both constants) is Jewish music. Composing for clarinet and guitar, Goldberg and Schott (with percussionist Mike Sarin) imbue the most haunting and

tremulous qualities of their respective instruments with a rare shingling. Where the common instance is to emphasize the history of the Jewish state and the worldly existence of the Diaspora, a music so introspective encourages the listener to reflect on more existentialist philosophies. Sometimes radicalism whispers more effectively than it shouts.

If New York makes a fitting grade for this meeting, *putting avant garde intent* then Gary Lucas has recorded its bedtime storybook. *Bury Being Born* takes its title from a line in Bob Dylan's "It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)". Lucas, once a guitarist for Caetano Zuehlman, here leaves dirt guitar play with traditional Jewish songs and melodies, material from Fiddler On The Roof, music inspired by Groucho Marx, some kitch cabaret waltzes by a duo called Kelly and Larry, and a few anti-anthems. The latter using by Lucas himself may have the broadest appeal of the vocal tracks but the achingly gorgeous National Steel version of "Sunrise Sunset" from Fiddler is what wins me over. The whole wistly eclectic

outing is unified by the sheer force of Lucas's personality, his exemplary musicianship and the line support from a handful of guests, including Zorn, all anchored by former Swan Jonathan Koffe and the superb Greg Cohen on drums and bass respectively.

TIM OWEN

Odysey
Reiteration

KNITTING FACTORY RECORDS 07/92/CD 10

The original Odysey emerged in 1983 described by Tousser Press as James Blood Ulmer's "most likable and accessible" outfit: the trio played wild, electro storming, swamp blues, hard-core. Ulmer supplied the bass parts by thumping the low strings of his guitar across the trademark chains and slashes of his lead. Charles Beahm, moonlighting from The Scream Trio (a New York played folk-electric violin and onetime Sonny Sharrock accomplice) Warren Benbow played drums.

14 years later, the trio met for a reunion

they lead to results so much they recorded a studio album *Mystorously*. Benbow became Benbow in the process, but that's not all that changed. (Dorine Steve Dasker: *hinky's* sleeveless hostess, this is a wash-out. Whereas the original trio were a free jazz ensemble, stretching out the rhythm and improvising this music chugs along mechanically, like they're playing to a click track. On "Channel 1" they use a looped vocal sample, its lissam mawk howl/scream. Ambient changes. The giggling cowboy beat and bluesy twangs of "Aghorn Du Allah" add up to Dire Straits or a Southern Comfort ad.)

Ulmer's folk drones were a great contribution to harmonolodges, but rhythmically boxed like this they're banal. As jazz players discovered in the early 60s with modes, if there's no possibility of ugliness or discord, there's no possibility of *event*; either Blood Ulmer's croaked voice is in great form, but wasted here. On 'I Am Bonafide' his thwack is so tired, he sounds like he was on the mobile arranging a round of golf. Guitar and violin are reduced to sterile evocative ornaments on a conveyor belt.

Poor records by great musicians are mysteries. Replaying the original *Gypsy* after Reunion felt like a magnificent explosion of candour and freedom. Benbow (without the r) was indeed one hell of a drummer. Since we've got the whole legacy of post-Clapton rock to osify to the pitfalls of cosy interpretations of the blues, Reunion is redundant — another gem on a vast heap of rubbish.

BEN WATSON

Ivo Perelman/William
Parker/Rashied Ali

Lavo
ZERO M.2 CD

Ivo Perelman Trio
Seeds, Vision And Counterpoint

to say that their saxophonist John Pierman has been prolific recently is an understatement: Even so, the Live CD represents what must be one of his most intimate partnerships. As previously documented on the Live Audio disc, *Soft Life*, Pierman performs here with the bassist William Furst and former Cold-chord drummer Rushad Rishi. Live was recorded in a single 45-minute take in June 1996 at New York's Knitting Factory. The sound is rough and ready, and the musicians make no concessions to any concert-broader than the moment. All of Parker got space to stretch out but, like players that they are, their featured passages are notable mostly for the respite they afford from Reinheim's onslaught.

Much has been made of Penelam's Brazilian nationality and of his fondness for reworking Brazilian folk songs in free jazz form, but he's really firmly entrenched in the post-Ayler tradition. Here, he challenges more established masters like Peter Brotzmann and

characters Gayle head-on in a display of sheer bullheadedness. That's not to imply he's no good. On the contrary, as volume and paid disc attention is so fickle, implacable stuff. I'm not sure how, but it's good enough to warrant a general release. Perhaps, like Gayle, you need to see him perform to get the full force of his personality and technique.

The Premlen-Gayle companion holds because Gayle recorded his best work to date. *Touchin' On Fringe* with Parker and Al Javis is nowhere near as good as that record, but *Seeds: Vision And Counterpoint* is. For this September 1996 session Premlen's partners were drummer Jay Parker and bassist Dominic Duval. Like Binker an alumnus of Cal Taylor's group, ex-members with live energies and occasionally utilizes a praiseworthy instrument. In under seven minutes the cooping piece demonstrates that Premlen is well able to build a piece through changes and vignettes, and to alternate or combine overblowing and dissonance with melodicism. These are not abilities you're likely to find from a man who, as the track says, "blows the corns off Sonny Rollins's East River Road." But Premlen, taking a detached mouthpiece, Duval bows frequently throughout, and in the following minutes you can hear him coo reflective scales and flurries from Premlen, and then envelop them in lyrical, before turning to electronic sound manipulation. Indeed, *Seeds* is great at churning the group dynamic, in the most apposite direction or where necessary showing up the musical infrastructure. The closing *Cantata*, explores the further reaches of combative tension, ultimately drawing closure from the pain of dissonance.

THE OWN

Plaramon

7. LEADERSHIP

Lithops

Una Unità
di **Mario Monti**, **Massimo Lodi**

Lithops

Devon
1972-1973

Tone Rec

Pholcus
5-8 PM/5-8 PM/10

Four musical quasi-objects from the European trilogy Markus Schmeidler's new *Platonism* record continues his deconstructions of the rock formation started on 1995's *Ask Up Canyon* and has resulted in a CD to die for. The cover art points in the direction of Mike Erni and Francis Picabia's dada collage 19th century medical etchings float among 90s Photoshop textures and the music is similarly arranged from disparate machines and exotic sounding or absurd sources (Jag Aroust Azar on plankspeel and 'smooring' Jochem Ruchardt on

bagpipes!) That's not here in the presence of drummer Jack LeBaron. His spacious, controlled percussion forms the major fix. So much so that even melancholic, major triads graze his hand to best effect on 'Formant' and 'Heterogloss' and 'Infused past the line crystal', desolate Hammond and flickering minor guitar chords pick up where Jack left off on 'Lovingly Stupid' and it is as if he had that recent scotch with the likes of Jan Wobbe and Patrick Croneille – where he formidable talents were too often buried in the material – haven't learned his rhythmic poise.

Music on Mars' Jan Wobbe is credited with 'locked chords, peadings, on Bender' and whatever those mythical instruments are, he must be saying them on his two solo albums releases, too, along with, while he knows, more, which remain unnamed. Wobbe is plants that can grow on stone, call it, for example, and the metaphor helps in finding a purchase of these peculiar, armored musical forms. The tracks on both records (both are vinyl only) include 'Jan O'Rourke is dead' to reuse Jan O'Rourke on CD on the new Mokai label later this year and, deceptively simple, analogue drum machine excursions, but it's only when you listen two or three times that you realize how (sloped) and so, of Werner's sound production (light-as-air) can be. Decker is more a busy bee, while Jan O'Rourke features the mashing-clock swing lines to be found on slow 'Movie On Mars' tracks. Maybe the slow HOP tracks begin like 'As these most scurrying, directionless things broods in the incubator.

French quartet *Trio Bec* sow the seeds of their music in the acoustic space of the studio with the standard rock requirements of drums, keyboard and the odd less-is-stranger guitar. But they immediately place the regulator: recording behind the glass of a digital processing set-up, and proceed to transform the source material as a scientist might conduct experiments through gloves that reach beyond the screen. The seven tracks on *Africa* are indeed in a higher resolution version of *Livez*. They're clearly, being lip-synched up. Quasi. Eric Scamier and the one dissonance here is the absence of rhythmic menace evidenced on their debut *L.D. Trioz-Tripz*. But what they live in is forward visibility: they are simply 'compete out', for in their peculiar, sci-fi edgy pop and rock, and out of the ground the music

ROSE YOUNG

The Pop Group

11- Ag- All Prostitutes
 12- Ag- All Prostitutes

Released by: Polygram, 1979. We do all Prospects (1956) were done in quick speed and funk appeal to young-hippies crowd, motion pictures. It's better to be a troublemaker and convulsive today. Again firm to the single. Where There's A Will (1956) is a track on this collection come from *Real Gone* (1956) Do We Suffer (1956) Music, 1979.

and We Are There (1980).

That overused term: *seminal*. *Significant*. *Landmark*. Supercharged with riotous personal anarchy, musicians The Pop Group exploded onto the Bristol Sound's paranoiac funk circuit. *Home* (1978), *Mark Stewart* (rig rig & panic) (1980), *There's a Riot Goin' On* (1981), *Payday*, (1983) are sleek, non-vocal versions of the rhythm that propels *Prostateitis*. Maximum Joy (1981), John Waddington (1982) and the obscure but titillating *Glenn Baker* (1983), *Don Caballero*. The press release cites Tricky and Massive Attack as inheritors. But The Pop Group was in a totally different league of vigour, commitment and urgent misanthropy. Ambient had yet to cast its tepid spell over the Bristol scene.

Mark Stewart sings like a nutter straddled in solitary confinement, an agonising bodyball of cool-soulman hysteria. It would be unbearable if the groups playing weren't so tight and risky, so judderingly in-your-face and incoherent. The breadth of the scene's palette is hard to credit: the raucousness of the *Black Flag* and *Dead Kennedys* caressless howl; the *Dead*'s *My Admiration* lesson in how do-it-yourself-outs can catch highlight instrumental grunge. The *Blackouts* ask *Ornette Coleman's* 'Buck The Clock' from *Inner Source* Factor: free beats and instrumental avocations mixed with baroque dancing. The politics: Amnesty archive reports is the usual liberal gutt; but treated to immolation point the paradox of commercialised protest transformed into a conflicting cauldron of punk-funk empathy. The way these linkages are made is a little more than a little interesting: *acoustic* is a reminder that the drawback of commercialism is not that it goes on, but that it's lame. *Philly*

NEW SPATIAL

Public Enemy

He Got Game
THE BATTLE OF THE BUCKETS

Crack! D and Flavio Flav's double-barrelled syllable is a misperceived routine. A vicious exhortation fringed by a ludicrous, Whistling echo. Together with the Spike Lee film this album announces: Public Enemy's Laurel and Hardy are now corporate signifiers of Black America. If there is nothing here that electrifies the senses like "You're Gonna Get Yours" a decade ago, that is because pop music has shifted to include their brand of iconoclastic propaganda.

The lyrics run from cod-against-eches ("We're ready for the real revolution which is the revolution of the mind... Love conquers all") to "Resurrection" (to industry-conscious wit). Entertainment director, the backs behind the riffs from *Politics Of The Sucker Pimps*. All par for the course. So it's the backings that attract.

"Resurrection" uses lush Superfly orchestration. "Shake Your Body" features a watered-down riff derived from Wild Cherry's "Play That Funky Music." "House Of The Rising Son" has impressive bass guitar and a neo-



Turnage gets serious

Mark-Anthony Turnage

Blood On The Floor

ARGO 455292 CD

Brush composer Mark-Anthony Turnage once said: "I'm reluctant to allow someone to improvise in my music. They might come up with something that would be incongruous." Well, he has now allowed it and they haven't. The jazz improvisors on his suite of pieces *Blood On The Floor* are Miles Davis guitarist John Scofield and former Weather Report drummer Peter Erskine, and their playing fits seamlessly into the arresting orchestral tapestry Turnage has created, performed here by The Ensemble Modern. The album is edited from live performances in London, Frankfurt and Cologne in 1996.

Turnage's music has gradually been edging itself towards a genuine Third Stream. The term was coined by composer Gunther Schuller in the 40s or 50s for the confluence of jazz and classical traditions illustrated by Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto* for The Woody Herman Orchestra, or maybe earlier, Gershwin's *Rhapsody In Blue*. But Stravinsky and his

successors had little true understanding of the music, and the stream always ran tidally.

It's no exaggeration to say that *Blood On The Floor* completely changes that situation. There may be other contemporary composers who have an equal or greater understanding of jazz — Gavin Bryars, was, in fact still is, a jazz bassist, but he hasn't attempted Third Stream composition anything like as ambitious as this. Turnage's love of jazz began early, and his music has often shown a clear jazz influence both in colours and rhythm. But *Blood On The Floor* is his first attempt to combine improvising musicians and a straight ensemble.

The title refers to a painting by Francis Bacon, a longtime inspiration for this composer. As one writer has noted, judging by the CD sleeve Turnage is alarmingly coming to resemble him more and more. Drug addiction, from which Turnage's brother died, is the harrowing topic of the suite of pieces "Eligly For Andy", featuring bluesy guitar work by Scofield, is tender without being doleful. The brooding and powerful movement "Dupeling The Fears" begins life as a double trumpet concerto, where the two instruments shadowed each other and contrasted open and muted lines. An earlier version was recorded on Argo by different personnel, and this scaled-down transcription appears as the last of nine movements.

Other tracks, notably the title number, have a more visceral impact, with Peter Erskine's jazz rock drumming prominent. There's a possible problem here. Erskine can't really power the ensemble as he would in a genuine jazz group, and often his role is to provide a commentary or decoration. He's at his most effective when interacting with Scofield's guitar. Classical saxophonist Martin Robertson is the other main soloist, and sounds surprisingly convincing on soprano. All the same, classical saxophone isn't a style but a lack of one, the plummy, legato tone designed to blend with the orchestra. Turnage could have used a jazz saxophonist such as Andy Sheppard — they read music, too.

But these criticisms simply reflect the scale of the challenge Turnage faced. *Blood On The Floor* is a compelling original work that grows in stature with each listening, completing the resurrection of a genre previously consigned to an undistinguished footnote of music history.

ANDY HAMILTON

"You look like a Jew." "Hey white people, you suck!" or "Slomp slomp slomp slomp pussy slomp slomp" while cutting classes at an Ivy League university is hardly a harbinger of the rockabilly. However, Pussy Galore's sophist refusal to embrace anything but with remains a brutal challenge to the status quo and a piercing mockery of the current (ahem) underground's received pieties. What separated them from other smart-ass provocateurs was that, despite their shock, they didn't hate rock 'n' roll enough to forsake the groove, the only thing that they apparently believed in was a Duane Eddy rumble. Nowhere is this more apparent than on the stunning 1988 *Suppose Slomp* (EP, which combines all the virtues of kick-ass rock 'n' roll with abominable Brechtian theatrics. Julia Calvert's brutal reading of David S. Penetration in *The Centurio*) hasn't been topped in a decade's worth of not grm see is -sator equators, while the version of Einstürzende Neubauten's "Yu Gung" — complete with samples from Public Enemy and Bob Bebe — is one of indie rock's few miracles. The definitive Pussy Galore moment, though, probably comes on "Revelation" when Juli Spencer boldly announces that his bossless band has got the funk.

Suppose Slomp was preceded by *Right Now* which was an altogether more scabrous affair. The group is less propulsive and a lot messier: the metal percussion (cutting-edge on the sleeve in a great music post-take) is often hard to take and the "fuck you's" are a lot louder and more direct. The level of cynicism is so high that they sound like The Cramps fronted by Mark E. Smith. Where *Suppose Slomp* is a great rock record regardless of genre, *Right Now* is a perfect summation of 1980s Armageddon sensibilities: trash culture, garage rock, hardcore tempos and anti-social noise.

Although continuing their rare willingness to engage with HipHop ("I Understand Me" contains a charming 2 Live Crew sample) Pussy Galore's swarming, 1990's *Don't Put For Me* (MCA), is generally too up its own arse to succeed as well as the other two. When they're not being loquaciously absurd, they sound a lot so much like The Boring Slaves, who they famously impersonated on their legendary *Go On Street* cassette. They can still generate a fearsome racket, though, which redeems the record even as they grow tired of holding their noses, realising there's nothing left to exploit.

PETER SHAFRO

Terry Riley/Pierre Marifan

Keyboard Study 2/Intimate 1

SAULNIER MUSIC SAULNIERCD 4541 CD

Arnold Dreyblatt

Centers 1/CD 1510

DECCA CD 4541 CD

Terry Riley's early Minimalist music may be surprisingly little heard for such an undoubted pioneer, but with Keyboard Study 2, the drive

tooth-kick, general simultaneous rhythms a true groove. Less welcome is a retreat to De La Soul's *Daisy Age* nursery for "He Got Game" and "Unstopable".

"What You Need Is Jesus" is sarcastic about boom-bay solutions, while "Super Agent" outlines the problems of ghetto life. "Go Cat Go" turns through the old emotive issues: black-white, self-out-hatred, hypocrisy/sales appearance/essence. As a delectably funny good time, He Got Game is fine, but you miss the explosion of binaries that happened when PE's sonic assault was bewildering the imagination.

BEW WATSON

Pussy Galore

Right Now

MUTE CD 1

Pussy Galore

Suppose Slomp

MUTE PGPPI CD

Pussy Galore

Dial M For Motherfucker

MUTE PGI CD

Pussy Galore may have been the biggest asshole to ever follow Let's Bangs. *Asshole* is everything decent, but these ten

(re) records have never sounded fresher. *Asshole* more appropriate. In a climate where an extremely well-scrubbed underground is obsessed with shiny surfaces, technical perfection and fluidity, where punk's smart and fun's come-on have been replaced by a mumbling and whispering version of John Lennon's primal scream therapy, and where adolescent rebellion has been reduced to a few cars of lager in last year's combat trousers, the scuzziness of Pussy Galore's bored-of-everything shock laces is as jolting as the waiting stretch of stale urine on a humid day.

Granted, privileged white bohemians singing

to release. Like Minimalism has finally gone far enough. It is not that this 1964 composition (originally released in 1968) is a good example of Riley's ability to generate complexity from the simplest of materials. 15 simple melodic patterns are repeated at tremendous speed and used as a foundation for improvisation: combinations of the figures allow unexpected patterns to emerge, an idea that Steve Reich and Philip Glass would explore several years later. The problem is that it sounds like it was recorded with a microphone swathed in an oven glove while the two pianists performed underweight in a newly warming pot. Compared to the clarity of Reich's *Piano Phase* or *Six Pianos*, this is definitely a must-miss recording. The two baroque pianists were members of the GRAP, a French New Music ensemble whose member Pierre Hantson composed the disc's companion piece, *Invisible I*. It is a fine enough example of 60s tootle-and-blow avant-garde art, but don't feel unduly upset if you miss out on this one, too.

Arnold Dreyblatt studied at various times with LaMonte Young, Alvin Lucin and Pauline Oliveros, about as splendid a selection of New Music gurus as you could look for. His music, usually based on a highly responsive, rhythmic playing of inverted string instruments, is intended to make the play of these harmonic overtones as clearly heard as possible. The original vinyl issue of *Nodal Excursion* in 1982, failed to capture his group's sound very well, but unlike the Ray disc, this release (remastered by Jim O'Rourke) has much improved sound quality. It won't be to all tastes—it's too easy to hear the repetition as merely mind-numbing and not pick up on the tantalizing overtones—but if you're so inclined then it's a magical experience.

Dreyblatt went on to explore slightly more complex variations on the same technique on *Propellers in Love* (RCA Red) but there's something about the relatively unadorned simplicity of *Nodal Excursion* that retains its charm. A retrospective collection of Dreyblatt recordings, *The Sound Of One Mind* is out out shortly on Table Of The Elements. Hopefully adding to his recognition.

BRUNO DUQUE

Wadada Leo Smith & Harumi Makino Smith Concord: Autumn Wind

WORLD/1146 WOODCO CD

John Tchicai & Yusef Komunyakaa

Love Notes From The Madhouse
RHYTHMIC/BLACKSWAN RHYTHMIC CD

Suddenly we're concerned with jazz's poetry records. Is poetry the new bebop or what? Of course, this is not the first time John Tchicai has mixed the spoken word into his music. Sometimes the lyrics have been his own, but here he provides settings for the poems of

Pulitzer laureate Komunyakaa, the notes frequently deferring to the text. This is real poetry, which means it needs several hearings to work out what it means, though sharply articulated it's hard to penetrate because of the obscurity, density and complexity of the imagery. In contrast to certain other genres I hesitate to mention, where the intent of thoughts are hammered home with the bluntest of verbal instruments. Without disturbing the effect of the texts, Komunyakaa adjusts his readings to the performance situation, as on "The River".

The album documents a concert at Chicago's Crown Theater last September. Tchicai is an excellent form, not least on a magnificent version of Billy Stravinsky's "Wood-Cut" where his tenor conures hemoglobin and eclosion into the living spirit of Johnny Hodges. Margaret Naber-Tchicai handles keyboard duties again, and the rest of this impressive group comprises the celebrated bassist Fred Hopkins, Tortoise guitarist Jeff Parker, baritone saxophonist Aaron Goldberg and percussionist Benita Hoshino. It's always too long between Tchicai's records, but *Love Notes* is, as usual, well worth the wait.

Concord Autumn Wind was also recorded in concert, this time in Durham, North Carolina. Basically a duet between the Smiths (Leo on trumpet, Wada on bass, mba and voice) Harumi performing the poetry), it develops into an intimate and personal session. This is not to suggest that the music is entirely quiet self-erasing and reflective. The opening "Hummingbirds Harvesting Nectar From The Bird Of Paradise Plant" is nearly eight minutes of insouciant virtuoso open trumpet. The title—one syllable short of a haiku—suggests a delicate Japanese painting, but Smith's playing is intense and hard-edged, totally focused, never discursive. That about sums up all his solos, though some are more meditative than others.

Only three of the tracks feature Harumi's poems, "Emmy", "Concord For Dazy Gillespie" and "Sunrise And Moonset (For Marion Brown)". She performs them effectively in English and Japanese, though the acoustics do her no favours.

BARRY WITHERSON

Jack Smith/Les Evening Gowns Damned

56 Ludlow St 1962-84 Volume One
ALSO AVAILABLE ON THE ELEMENTS
451 04940 CD

More than just a heretofore presented personal tribute to the cryptic, wayward genius of antihero and turn-of-the-century underground film maker Jack Smith, this remarkable compilation, selected and assembled by Tony Conrad from his own stable archives, conveys a powerful sense of complicity. These recordings cover a period that witnessed the emergence of the original New York underground scene, when the artscot, sexual and drug subcultures were all attending the

same parties and sharing the same lefts bars and galleries. As a result, some musos like LaMonte Young and his circle bound themselves rubbing shoulders with such tabulous, well-oiled legends as Francis, Francis, Piero Montez and Rotten Row. In Conrad's own words, there were a lot of electric currents running through the East Village in the early 60s, and this collection helps complete the circuit.

The opening track "L'Enfance Orgy" says it all. Using the tape delay technique first introduced in his "Three Lovers", Conrad builds up a relentless crescendo of screams to accompany the half-sexual misadventures that occur during a sequence in Jack Smith's 1962 masterpiece *Flaming Creatures*—one of the most heavily biased pieces of celluloid in film history. What is particularly striking about this collaboration is not only the extent to which it anticipates the art rock brutality of Throbbing Gristle, Suicide and The Velvet Underground, but how much these two seemingly contradictory personalities bring out in each other. The rough, sexual excesses to be found in Conrad's music are suddenly laid bare as are the excessive nuancing and sense of detail in Smith's own highly personal artistic vision. This is called forth in "Cold Starry Night", which sets a dreamy elegiac recession by Smith against the icy beauty of a loveless lesbian. John Cale on sax and Conrad on bowed cembalo. For the next part, however, this collection belongs to the magnificent Jack Smith alone. His voice trembles with the soulful grandeur dignity of a celebrity underwriter as he bathes and preens his way to glory. This sumptuous and sensitive composition allows the listener to share that journey with him.

KEN HOLLINGS

Sun Ra Space Is The Place MCA IMPULSE MP10412 CD

The production of the 1972 *Space Is The Place* sessions, which feature Sun Ra with his Astro Intergalactic Infinity Arkestra, was supervised by Impulse producer Ed Michael and originally released on Blue Thumb under the same title in 1973. Whatever the ins and outs of the original deals, the eventual reappearance of this material on Impulse must be good news for Ra fans, as by the standards of the most capricious of artists, the *Space* sessions have been both shockingly well documented and relatively clearly recorded.

The title track runs for half of the disc's 43 minutes. Beginning with Farina organ pulses, the Arkestra launch into a mesh of protracted polyrhythmic riffing. The all-female Spoke Ethnic Voices quartet, led by Yusef Tyson, sing the title in a modulating mantra while a repeated baritone sax motif, courtesy of Danny Thompson anchors garrulous forays into the outer regions by the extended horn section. Thompson's baritone and the Spoke Ethnic Voices are the rocks around which the



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Royal Festival Hall
Queen Elizabeth Hall
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john peel's **meltdown 98**

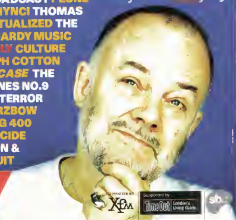
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Ankstrer rob and surge. Sun Ra himself takes brief, exploratory solos with the Farfisa, and saxophonist John Gilmore makes a memorable vocal contribution, with agitated ape-like whoops and howls. It all adds up to a classic Sun Ra arrangement, sprawling yet tightly structured and impeccably balancing effusion and repetition.

The follow-up "Imagins" and "Discipline" are more straightforward, evidence of Ra's debt to Duke Ellington and of his roots in the big band era. In the former, swing rhythms remind us of his apprenticeship in Fletcher Henderson's dance band and there is plenty of space for solo expression in the latter. "Solo Of Sounds" returns to boisterous structures with a vengeance (inspired by a hallucinosis cure) of fiery, tremor-blowing from the brass and scuffling saxophony. It still sounds utterly contemporary. The apparently egotistical also saxophonist Marshall Allen puts in a fine unkillable performance throughout. "Rocket Number Nine" closes the album with a sprightly tumble of scatty vocalizing, hummingbird ensemble figures and aerobic saxophony, closing with an echo of that initial Farfisa pulse.

On balance, Space Is The Place documents the aspects of Sun Ra most appropriate to inquiry: As well as Archie Shepp's Mama Too Tight and Charles Mingus's Black Saint, it balances freedom and tradition and puts new twists to traditional modes. While stranger Ra fans will dismiss the lack of delusion in the recording and the even balance of the mix, most listeners will probably appreciate the extra clarity.

TIM OWEN

Talk Talk

Artists Records
(EMI 7243 854801 2) (CD)

So EMI feel the need for another approval of Talk Talk. Doubtless their decision has nothing to do with the critical palades heaped on vocalist Mark Hollis's recent solo album. But in highlighting the earlier part of the group's career, EMI have failed to grasp the saint of Hollis's album—or indeed, what Talk Talk were truly about when they found their artistic voice. Although this dredged up collection of remakes and B-sides does nobody's memory any real favours, it does demonstrate that even at their early, superior gloss pop stage, Talk Talk revealed the songwriting sense that would later mature into the albums *Spirit Of Eden* and the recently titled *Laughing Stock*. By then, EMI had lost interest—introspection and commerciality not being considered suitable bedfellows.

Unsurprisingly, the latter tracks on this compilation reconfirm the true heart of Talk Talk. Given understanding and the freedom to breathe, the group would surely have come up with a divine magnum opus. As it stands the armchair relationship between the group and their former label continues, and EMI's release of this compilation is hardly likely

to ameliorate it. Even so though there's nothing new here, it's enchanting to hear "It's Getting Late In The Evening" again—dark, somber self pity expressed in Hollis's inimitable style. His voice has always been remarkable at its best on a slow burn. In such a situation, with minimal musical backing, it reveals a new quality: a lustre appears that is normally lost among excessive instrumentation. Although this may not be a complete representation of Talk Talk, it's a pointer towards Hollis's self-absorbed reflection. Regardless of EMI's intentions, that can only be a good thing.

VELVET PAVLE BAC

Tricky

Angels With Dirty Faces
Halo Music/Scotti Concord

Even if it was just 25 kids in a Bronx high school gym that made up Melé Mel's obsession: the music of the Hip-Hop continuum has always been about fame. Since *Da La Soul's* 1991 album *Da La Soul Is Dead* though, the predominant voice has moved from EPMD's "I'm a cocksmyth with the key to fame)" to Notorious B.I.G.'s "You're nobody if somebody shoots you." Along with Biggie's *Life After Death*, Tricky's latest is the dearest statement from a genre feeling the full weight of both its success and its machismo. Granted musically *Angels With Dirty Faces* probably has more to do with Tom Waits's crumbling infrastructure and the druggy New Orleans hoodoo of Dr. John. The Night Tripper than it does with Hip-Hop, but Tricky's wild burndrums are never too far from the surface. The record's centerpiece, "Money Greedy," has strong affinities with Biggie's urban gothic worldview ("I'll be with a quickness / I be dead when I'm strong"), allusions to EPMD ("I guess it's literally business") and a dysfunctional take on the Chemical Brothers' *Beast*. Beat talkback/sampling fusion that early 90s Bristol swing helped inaugurate. Elsewhere, the beats and scratches keep the album from falling completely into the hands of downtown NYC, evoking Marc Robb and Calvin Weston.

For all of the explicit references that seem to place Tricky within the Hip-Hop community, *Angels* is an interrogation of the industry and a bitter, unapologetic rant against certain New Yorkers who think "they're so cool." There's a series of rhymes on "Money Greedy" that no MC worth his weight in Kinetel would be caught dead with: "Bong then / Bong What have I got to boast about / Ghetto means didn't make me / I got out / Security / Social / Standing in government lines / takes what's mine's." Throughout, the often jagged and tauntingly occasionally yelled-out music reads like symbolic violence against Hip-Hop: beats dragged through junkyard of guitar noise schoolyard of tormenting beats and screams of blues outcasts. On "Dance" (which sounds like a Cuban reinterpretation of the Massacre Attack bluesprint) Tricky says "Please won't you / Stop me talking like a tough guy"

and then barely whistles the line "I'm so scared to be a gun-toting gangster wannabe."

Predictably, Tricky's real villain is reserved for the last which is "Gull of Soul." "Broken Homes," "6 Minutes," "Analyse Me" and "Second Companions" are all about the music industry and the poisonous perils of notoriety. But where Public Enemy's critique of same was a political challenge, the seemingly fashionable exposes of the evils of the biz are now the whining, sipping scraps of spoiled brats whose parents allowed them one more piece of cake and now they're sick. The ghosts of Biggie, 2Pac, Kurt Cobain and DJ Simpson all crop up, and while "I wanna rattle wanna blow my head off in Seattle" is a stunning couplet, there are few things more boring than hearing crotch wags "murder a media" or taunt "those who want to analyze me."

PETER SHAPIRO

Various Artists

Wildstyle
BCH Records / CD (CD 100)

This is a reissue of an amazing soundtrack produced for the Hip-Hop docu-drama of the same name made in 1983. *Wildstyle* the movie documented the burgeoning Hip-Hop scene in New York and gave special emphasis to graffiti, rather than the music and the breakdancing, which together made up Hip-Hop's holy trinity of skills.

Gruffa artists such as Lee, Lady Pink and the silver-tongued Fat Five Freddy played lead roles and though their acting was terrible they lent the film an undeniable authenticity. *Wildstyle* was also the closer counterpart to the more commercial *Rocky Horror*, these during a short-lived lesson for (mostly bad) Hip-Hop films at the start of the 80s that also produced *Breakin'* and *Breakdance*.

The soundtrack possesses the same sense of realism. Many of the featured artists were simply picked out of the flowering New York Hip-Hop scene and given a chance to cut it live. These include Prince Whippet, Whop, Busy Bee and Grandmaster Caz, some of the earliest Hip-Hop artists producing Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bambaataa and Kurtis Blow. This is a rare document of their talents as poets, forgers and recording artists never materialized. Almost all were later forced to watch from the sidelines as more commercially astute artists pushed from their pioneering talents.

This is particularly galling when applied to Double Trouble, two brothers whose rapping skills are as good as anything that's subsequently followed and whose unscripted lyrical routines between both film and album. In fact *Wildstyle* is a largely live production, full of exuberant freestyles on low grade microphones, echoing around large, crowd-filled halls. The climax of the film was an anarchic outdoor concert, from which several energetic recordings appear here.

Musically *Wildstyle* was also ahead of its time with a mixture of heavy funk and cold

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EXPLORING THE MOMENTS WHEN...

LAW & AUDER RECORDS

Electro menace that spoke clearly of New York's early 80s social ills, contributing a better counterpart to the rap's piousness. Fantastic though it is, the album is full of hits. Tracks are cut off too early or too abruptly, and there are basically only four cuts spun out over a mix of 17 instrumentals and raps in retrospect: however, the ramshackle approach seems entirely appropriate, exemplifying the carefree nature of Old School Hip Hop.

JARE BARNES

Weird Little Boy
Weird Little Boy

JARE BARNES

Masada

Tut

JARE BARNES

John Zorn
Filmworks 8 1997

TANDEM HC027316 CD

John Zorn
The Circle Masada

TANDEM HC027316 CD

Weird Little Boy is evidently a collaborative effort: The music is partly credited to John Zorn (sax, samplers and keyboard), Chris Codrione (guitar), Jody Spence (guitar), keyboards, drums), Mike Rother (drums and vocals), and William Winant (percussion). The packaging is lovely: Designed by Hue Poon, it collects graphics by Myriad Blue to illustrate a 50 page booklet containing hand-drawn post-Bukowski text abstractions by Dennis Cooper.

There are a lot of contrasts among these exploratory works. One track, "Jungfrau Of Water," is basically a retread of Long John Silver's, a basically a retread of Long John Silver's, a basically a retread of Long John Silver's. The most apposite cardinals are the neo-electroacoustics of the same group's *Albino*, or the Zorn/Fantasia Eye melody of *Nani Nani*. *Weird Little Boy* is a valuable reminder that the increasingly corporate profile of Zorn betrays a thoroughgoing commitment to the avant garde.

Tut or Nine, is the latest installment in Zorn's ongoing series of *Masada* recordings, about which precious little remains unsaid in these pages: The musicianship is consummate; the tension and melodicism in the music in perfect balance; and there are surely few harmonically informed post-top notes anywhere near as immaculate or exciting. But if you have previous volumes, or don't need this one, in his notes to *Filmworks 8*, Zorn reveals that there are over 200 titles in the *Masada* songbook, so expect more in this series.

On *Filmworks 8* itself, four *Masada* compositions flesh out an eclectic sequence collectively titled *The Part Of Last Rest*. Two further pieces originate from a luminous/percussion duet Zorn developed with Winant to accompany a play, while the remaining three were written for the film which provided the title. Sad film is a

documentary about Jewish refugees who emigrated to Shanghai from Nazi Germany in the '30s. The tentacles are twisted prompts Zorn to synthesize Chinese and Jewish elements, principally through the juxtaposition of the *Masada* String Trio with Min Xiao-Fen on pipe. Guatemalan Marc Ribot and perist Anthony Colton also contribute. This is quite another side of Zorn to *Weird Little Boy*. Although no less inventive, the music is idiomatically conventional by comparison. "Ebonnet," for instance, one of the *Masada* tunes, takes on a pizzicato pastoralism reminiscent of Navon Volont's work for string quartet. The other sequence on *Filmworks 8*, titled *Com Boy*, Go To Hell, is a percussion duet performed by Guy Bonnet and Kinny Wollman for a gay porno film. *Com Boy* doesn't get so well, but its fragments ring many changes, with sonorous drumwork and the resonant bell tones of vibraphone and metal percussion predominant.

An augmented *Masada* String Trio features again on *Zenulon*, one of the two discs of *The Golden Circle*. Ribot, Bonnet and *Masada* drummer Jody Baron join the core trio of string players, Paul Feldman, Erik Friedlander and Greg Cohen, for further extensions of the *Masada* material in the style of Bor Kibbutz. Here, Zorn's capable ensemble strike creative sparks without grandstanding, but on occasion the group seems focused to the point of narcissism. The trio gets the other *Golden Circle* disc, *Isosolar*, to themselves. *Zenulon* is fine enough, but these performances are revelatory. The *Masada* compositions sound utterly conceived in these first two string arrangements. The klezmer references are underplayed in favor of a more exploratory approach and a sharper focus on texture and mood. The emphasis on low strings allows Zorn to evoke the earthy vibrancy of Yiddish music and the woody tone of the dominant klezmer instrument, the clarinet, while drawing upon and integrating elements of broader chamber traditions.

TIM OWEN

Robert Wyatt
Rock Bottom

HARMONY HC021426 CD

Robert Wyatt
Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard

HARMONY HC021427 CD

A few years ago Robert Wyatt, always the funniest and most open of interviewees, spoke about the accident which left him paralyzed at age 27. "Suddenly I became middle-aged overnight. So I'm stuck with the experience of a 27 year old in the early 70s, and I've just got to make that work now forever. That's the oddest thing. Not being able to grow up fully in the way I imagine I might have done."

Rock Bottom, now reissued with new cover art and Wyatt's good essay about it, is history, was written and recorded on either side of that accident. One of its concerns opposes babies vs

adults, articulating a kind of rage at having to grow up. On the opening "Sea Song" Wyatt compares his beloved to a fish ("partly porque partly baby sperm whale"). He likes her drunk, and escapes from adulthood into intoxication, but can't understand her the next morning when she turns into a grumpy adult. Throughout the record, the music strays to escape through long scalar progressions, always going further than you would expect, either upwards ("Sea Song") or down ("A Last Straw") to the very bottom of the piano and the seabed.

The outro of "Sea Song" moves with simple logic from 4/4 to a skaying 1/16, creating a waltzy kind of seaweed dance for Wyatt to cut in. In the sleeveless essay for Wyatt recalls the waltzy variety of the little keyboard he was writing on in 1972, making a connection to the shimmering lagoon of Venice outside his window. (Nicholas Roeg was there at the same time, shooting the sinister *Trappist* Don't Look Now.)

By the time we reach "AMIAKIA," with its rhythm built from the sound of breathing, Wyatt has reinvented into baby language Words disintegrate ("No no no") with an almost painful intimacy while he serenades the women as "my leader." Wyatt brings off this strange lighthouse act through the eerie, childlike conviction of his singing; and the sheer beauty of the melody. Guy Wondra's torn sax sounds like it's trying to be born. The woman gets a chance to answer back. She neither his ladder nor his dinner, and she cratches his silly baby language ("And what's a baby when it's a fish?"). But when the adult woman appears, the rhythm immediately stops and the music deserts. The adult drives away the waltzy baby world. But finally the woman agrees to play along and accepts the baby language ("I'm Able your partner").

For Wyatt's Scott's singing of the sturdy anthem at the close of the album (over Fred Frith's waltz chords) provides a hymn-like resolution. But even this is a song of rage and struggle against the contents of the adult world (cars, TV, phones...) It all ends suddenly on a weird cackling laugh.

If Rock Bottom is an example of self-indulgence and learned narcissism producing great art, *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* is a more social occasion. Slightly less of a unified and personal project, where Wyatt shares composing credits with Frith, Mogens Fosbøl, and others. But songs like "Hushy Mouth" and "Team Spirit" are still vintage Wyatt. "Hushy Mouth" offers a James Joycean vision of the anti-hero Harold masturbating by the canal, leading to the sea, leading to oceans. "Even under old Harold's masturbatory by the canal, leading to the sea, leading to oceans."

These songs empathize with victims "Soup Song" is sung by a joint of bacon outraged at being thrown into a pot of soup. "Team Spirit" evokes school football matches and pivots in trench warfare and the singer feels booted about like a football. Again revisionism comes at the close of the waltzy hymn-like version of "Song For Dad" by Charles Haden.

CLIVE BELL

in brief **avant rock**

Reviewed by Tom Ridge

The Azusa Plane *Amencia Is Dreaming Of Universal Strong Theory* (CLASH) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS

Mels Cline & Devin Sarne *Rose Thorns* (RIDE) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS
Jason Demko frequently begins his others end with climactic guitar noise which he then extends into an essay piece of work. His second full-length release as the Azusa Plane gives him five reign to work through some pretty astounding guitar improv combining a sense of vast space and combining with moments of surprising intimacy. Demko plays his trombone like a little too early perhaps, with the infrequent buzzing and howling of "Strings." It's the remaining tracks leaving you with a vague sense of anti-climax but there are undeniably exhilarating moments throughout.

If Mels Cline and Devin Sarne don't manage to scale the same heights, well they're not exactly climbing the same mountain. There is a low key after where the atmosphere hangs thick and oppressive though their drones are punctuated by occasional bursts of fuzzy guitar. Some might consider it heavy, but Cline's solo is better deployed within the constraints of his other group, The Geriatric Fibers.

Blowpipe *Pendulum* (NOISE) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS

The Dylan Group *It's All About (Ramblin' & Fuzzin' Wring)* (SUBVERSIVE) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS
Blowpipe's follow up to last year's impressive *First Circle* sees them broaden their palette. Their merging of electronic programming and breakbeats with jazz elements has a more eclectic flavour this time round. They introduce a harder, more mechanistic edge to the rhythms, and subject the horns to heavy distorting sound treatments. Blowpipe defy combine the rigidity of Electronic with the free elements of jazz without sacrificing much of their own character to either.

The Dylan Group's formula of combining lounge jazz vibraphone with sturdy beatlines suggests a halfway house between Tortoise and Philip Glass, where the lightness of the group's delivery biases the quality of their arrangements and complexity of their shifting textures. Unfortunately once the formula is established, The Dylan Group are reluctant to stray too far from it. So much so that something as carry as the capricious machine samples on "Scooter" Must Harry come across as a welcome variation. Then they spice things with the weak joke of "Jorn

Cages 4 3 3" reinterpreted as "3 0 9" while their other cover a sloppy attempt of The Gift From (Spanish) is even weaker

Galexico *The Black Light* (BY) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS
John Convertino and Joy Burns are dispirited converts to Sly and Robbie rhythm runs for hire employed by ORB and Grant Sand among others. Here they've come up with a Country-nor soundtrack of some calibre using elements scavenged from a border Western twang guitar, brushed drums, polka rhythms, and a maelstrom horn section, with the occasional desolate ballad thrown in. It's certainly evocative of its parched South Western setting and a happy thought while considering the diversity of styles and material crammed into less than an hour of music. But their musical Ro Grande flows a little too smoothly at times.

Doldrums *Feng Shui* (V) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS
Mandible *Chatter Food* (FOR THE MOON) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS

The Doldrums make a brave stab at programming edits and studio cut-ups, despite mostly imposed passages contrasting the airy nature of their desk tinkering with the organic feel of the latter sections. "K-Ray Mc Bert" centres a long, unfolding drone around which severely edited percussion notes judder and sputter, a neat inversion. But Doldrums really stretch out way beyond their more obvious rock contemporaries on the two lengthy suites, "Left In An Airport Gift Shop" and "Ascending Copper Mountain", which allow them the time to fully realise their complex, multi-laid arrangements.

Mandible Chatter are similarly keen to incorporate a wide range of Ambient sounds and edits into their free-wheeling scheme, but the results are bafflingly uneven. Their ambitions range wide from the pop-folk of "Sad Tree Song" to the belly sound collage of "Blessing From The Kingdom Of Silence" not to mention a fairly straight rendition of Spacemen 3's "So Hot". But given such a broad remit, it's no surprise the album lacks the sense of wholeness of Doldrums' better focused work.

He Said Omaha *Matching* (CROSSROAD) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS

Mogwai *Kicking A Dead Pig* (V) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS

Kante *Redirections* (SWEET) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS

If all three of these new albums are made to suffer under the hands of their approved

remixers, they each possess individual tracks of considerable potency. Wherever a whole album is given over to disparate groups of remixes, the weakest exert a strong centrifugal pull on the original, breaking down once-cohesive works into their base elements, which are subsequently scattered into abstract new patterns, often with little or no resemblance to the source material. He Said Omaha's remixed debut, *Catch*, suggests retains the greatest degree of homogeneity though the three mixes of "Sold Or Vornish" which take the track from semi-blues to Ambient by way of trance Electronic, are just plain baffling.

Kante's *Redirections* undergoes Electronic, minimalist and atmospheric fragmentation treatments – the "Resonance" mix of "Sourness" stands out for the way it contrasts the rigidity of its robotic rhythm and a melodic, pop-like refrain.

After a promising start with Hood's lethally efficient remix of "Like Herod", the Mogwai album disappoints, possibly because the original Young Team EP was such a strong work in little need of fixing. Here, the likes of Third Eye Foundation and Alex Empire conduct some thorough overhauls, in the process removing Mogwai's characteristically raucous dynamics and replacing them with characterless breakbeats and edits.

Phantom *Firebomb* (EP) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS

Phantom *Phantom Plays* (The Eyes EP) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS
From the off, Phantom burst forth like the Cramps on smart drugs. Following the grinding track of "Firebomb" they ease into the rhythmic atmospheres of "Phantom Number One" all the time maintaining an air of barely contained brutality. Better still is "The Wolfman": a tribute to Wolfman Jack where free sea and vocalist Spacemen's deranged ranting spurs basic rock 'n' roll into abstract territory. The *Phantom Eyes EP* is even heavier on primitive expression and drawn-out experimentation – check the demented Bo Diddley sample of "Degeneration" and the tonalistic yet violent "Phantom Number 3".

Propeller *Ordo* (SWEET) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS

Southerner *Templemate* (MAD) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS

Stars Of The Lid *Moonlighting* (The Nocturnal) (HUM) (EP) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS

Propeller's Ambient minutiae are collected from short bursts of activity, each one a sudden flare-up that quickly dissipates, but not before capturing a mood or a moment and briefly illuminating the surrounding space like an existential firework. Yet for all the different moods compacted in its brief pieces *Ordo* is an intriguing route to the fold by David Soby's former outlier with Zoviet France.

Southerner work up brighter flights of abstraction, but they lack the charm of Propeller. Their undulating pulses and drones sound ambiguous in places, especially on the perching "Templemate". Mostly they fail to bind the various sound fragments at their disposal into a larger concept nor do they work as self-contained pieces. Southerner's Andy Brown has done better work as part of Jammie.

No such problems with Stars Of The Lid. On this release they continue a line of musical thinking based on pieces that spread outwards like ripples, as opposed to following a single linear direction. The title of their debut *Musik For Nihilus One*, now sounds like a manifesto. Side two's live recording evolves all at-encompassing drone out of the audience murmur, conjuring the fluxion of music generated from the ambience of the performance space and not the performance itself.

The Spiny Antlers *The Spiny Antlers: Last Supper* (CLASH) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS

It's difficult to work out if The Spiny Antlers' songs emerge out of the surrounding noise, chaos, like some grand cut-unfold-in-scheme or if the chaos is an afterthought, added as favouring to partially obscure what amounts to fairly unremarkable, post-Postmodern songforms. When such song titles as "Wikefield Tortoise Song" are about as interesting as the song itself, you know you are in trouble. The occasional eruption of energy doesn't compensate for all round sloppiness in pursuit of nothing in particular. But the thunderous "Wings Introduction" closing the disc indicates the Antlers might be an altogether different proposition.

Various Artists *Elmum For All* (EP) **CLASH** FOR ROCKERS

Of the four British artists showcasing a track, apace here, Scanner is the most obscure. His sound collage on "Mentri" sounding terse and compressed, what with its noisy samples squeezed into the spaces in between echoing slits of sound, 46,000 Fibres punctuate linear synth sounds with tremulant guitar over a distressing neo-nocturnally drum pattern. It doesn't quite get as a combination of machine and organic music, but it's an admirable attempt to develop something new through such unexpected juxtapositions. On the flipside Daryl's live performance of "Rats" sounds uncomfortable, their lurches in tempo don't sound entirely planned. On the contrary, it feels like the song is about to skip out of the group's control, with curiously random vocals adding to the sense of imminent collapse. Applique saved the show with "Weightless Conditions" for the way they bounce violent sonic outbursts off a gritty, compulsive groove.

SCANNER SIGNS OF CHAOS

PROPOSITION

REVIEW BY MICHAEL HEAT

Pages: 1
00912950 REACTCD125
Cover: 154, 498, Left: 79, 42
Lines: 22
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in brief critical beats

Reviewed by Peter Shapiro

All Seeing I Megabyte (12)

G104 Cur That Shut (12)

DMX Krew Party Beats (12)

Playboy (12)

"Playboy" is a witty and very cheeky follow-up to "The Beat Goes On" and all the better for it. A disco-cubap funk in The Whipsn. "And The Beat Goes On" and Ripples. The Beat Goes On And On? "Megabyte" joyously roves in its staidness where "The Beat Goes On" never did, reminding you how clever it was. The flip "Booty In The F" is equally dumb, being little more than the nasalized steps of Grand Funk Railroad updated for post-hip-hop Britain.

Equally mind-bogglingly enjoyable is G104 (aka Jammin' UNITS) "Kung" - a reconstruction of Carl Douglas's "Kung Fu Fighting" that is the original's catchphrase against some backwards, with- and the biggest drum sound since the heyday of Slide and The Sweet. The rest of Cur That Shut is similarly insane, but not as endearing.

There may be a fine line between patchy and outright theft, but DMX Krew is clearly on the wrong side of the fence. Jack The Groover is meant to be the 90s equivalent of the "Jack LaRue" record that updated Chic and Mel and Kim for House heads, but it's merely a shameless on-off of "Looking For The Perfect Beat" and "One More Shot" which isn't to say it doesn't move something like mind.

Blue Gravity Pull/River Drive (12)

From Toronto Beat Boy, Smith's Street Beats label, this 12" marks a neat compromise between the current vogue for clinical precision with old-fashioned virtues like funk and tone colour. "Gravity Pull" mixes hip-hop nuance and technical rigour with colour, while "River Drive" overcomes jazzy sprezzatura with a crashing drum break and a bassline that doesn't quit.

Cosmodrome Proposition Four (12)

The Conclusions Musicales Au Vagabondie Steele (12)

I hope that I'm not just being lazy, but the inevitable comparison here is to Add N to x, which there are no "Kings on other and "Mys Hoffmeyer and Schreier are a bit more lounge in check, the sound and aim of Proposition Four (the Conclusions Musicales Au Vagabondie Steele) is very similar to On The Wires Of Our Nerves (it should also be noted that Cosmodrome's JJ Perry influences

avoid "EVA" in favour of "Gonos")

Peripatet' there's a track called "Tubula Bala" and their retro-synth doesn't stop at the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. It embraces B's synth schlock as well as Gershwin/Kingdaisy like generalists. Mississipp John Hurt?

Mixmaster Mike Value (12)

1.2 Inch Combo Double (12)

Jeep Beat Collective Reposestos Wadistyles (12)

It's safe to say that no one else makes sicker MC/DJ discs as intricate, bold and audacious as Mixmaster Mike. Like 1996's *Plunk's* (also here) Mike is a vigorous, outlandish assertion of Mike's skills on the decks that incorporates devastating scratching, implausible juxtapositions and layered soundlines in an ethos of hip-hop culture that nobody can hope to keep up with. Feel the irony.

On the other hand, Jeep Beat Collective (aka Cheshire's Dave Dawes) sticks to the party links on this retrospective of his first two records of hook-heavy lurchers. Dawes isn't interested in leaving apart syntax or deferring the turntable's status as a musical instrument just good of funk music. Rather than extending lightning-speed juxtapositions across an entire side of a 12" like Mixmaster Mike, Dawes slows down the pace of the cuts and keeps them within four or five minute jump structures for maximum duration and headbanging appeal.

Mr Quark A Tour Of My Subatomic Thoughts (12)

The original mix of "You Hear People Say" is a street-corner sermon mixed with scratching, beats, smooth pseudo-coosy guitar, occasional double bass riffs and lots of pregnant pauses. It suggests that downtempo beat collage hasn't completely worn itself out yet. By trying hard to please the other mixes (ie. to tone and focus) might convince you otherwise.

Nucleus/Paradox This Side Of Forever/Deconstruct (12)

Hidden Agenda/Seven (12)

Three Gates/Talk Eggs (12)

"This Side Of Forever" broods Miles Davis's trumpet sound and organ chatters from Don Pagan and James then stranded

in a forbidding neighbourhood of ominous bass notes and frighteningly irregular drum patterns. "Deconstruct" is a bit more direct with its low end, and more self-composely spooky with its keyboard samples, but underneath the Technop trailer there are some great Oriental metal percussion samples.

Hidden Agenda's Fall Eggs (12) wases attempted funk-pop in the best paranoid drum in a bass record since Phish's Hidden Agenda EP. Seven's "Transmission" is the least attractive track here, but succeeds for the same reasons: a use of space and dynamics far in advance of the two-step hordes. As a reprochement between the jazzier and more industrial sides of drum in bass, the new strain heralded by these records takes the best from both worlds and proves how boring the two are on their own.

Si-(cut).db vs Scanner Boyzve (12)

This excellent collaboration between Robin Rembrand and Douglas Berland, two of Electronic's more interesting thinkers, is a further exploration of the deconstructed rhythm called the click, by Sade-Fire-Jones. Taking AJ Jackson's hummingbird beat from AJ Green's "I'm Glad You're Here" into the computer, Rembrand and Berland remove the function of rhythm entirely from this music, leaving only the needle clicks of the machine ingers, which make startling counterpoints to the quasi-topical synth pads on top. Ambient conjuncture of the highest order.

Theorem The First Of Four Elements (12)

The road song was once an expression of the urge for freedom, but since Austro and Euro-Excess it has been a celebration of the monotony of motor. Like Lawrence (aka Theorem's code to Detroit's "Highway" shift) is no different, cars run by a blur of colour but the blacktop background never changes no matter how far you travel. The other tracks are similarly hypnotic, despite a stronger accent on rhythmic thrust.

Sticky Flying Monkey Part (12)

Unlike the rock-rock, nudge-nudge Easy Listening escapades of Taps's debut, *Flying Monkey Part* inhabits a dark, gritty soundscape. The sources may be the same but the results are less ethereal and more subterranean. The Drunken Herd review is reminiscent of 23 Sados ethno-dub with just a sprinkle of Martin Denny's marinated while "Spies Get" mixes all those clichés of misplaced 50s lounge culture slightly something beyond the knowing witch of slurring heaters retreating from their responsibilities.

in brief global

Reviewed by Clive Bell

Goran Bregovic *Ederless Hussey* 543310 CD

An ex-Yugoslav rock star turned film composer, Bregovic scored *Like Water for Chocolate*, the stunning French film about the hapless matriarch. Instead of pacifying the period music, Bregovic opted for the soaring, Yemite voice of Oiza Haza plus contemporary Middle Eastern players. The opposite of what you'd expect of a soundtrack for a lavishly mounted costume drama, the result was full of passion and chutz. Just like the films of fellow Yugoslav Emir Kusturica (*Time Of The Gypsies* [Ohrpuls]) also scored by Bregovic. Selected from his soundtracks of the last decade, this collection is full of passionate melodies and emotionally driving writing. Bregovic favours lived-in voices, like Repi from Anissa Davani and Scott Walker bawling, "The Man From Reno" from Sava Alkai, are both featured, plus an emotive turn from the wonderful, Cesaria Evora.

Vusi Khumalo *Follow Your Dream* 2000 BWA04 CD

The kind of music that is supposed to "lift your spirit" with its allegedly "joyful sound" is inevitably missing almost beyond belief. Sick arrangements and gee-whizz keyboards squeeze all signs of life out of these songs — Afro-jazzy funk-style elements tossed into a musical Moulton and blended to a bland pop. Various South African vocalists, members of the Cuban lineage group and a British horn section are all recorded to follow pretensions at Peter Gabor's *Good World* studio. The only ray of light is Byron Waller's intelligent, searching trumpet, but he's wasted in the soul-searching context. Somewhere at the back of the mix is the album's nominal star Vusi Khumalo who played drums on Raul Seixas's *Graceland*. '90s greeting-by-numbers jazz production at its uplifting worst.

Airto Moreira/*Various Artists* *Tribal Ethno Dance Cha/gyter One Drum N' Metal* 2000 BWA03 CD

Packaged like it was some branded nouveau hippy tribal rave-ala this is in fact the real African deal, but with a twist. Brazilian percussionist Moreira has selected field recordings from four sources: South African percussion ensemble Dzikali Project, Khondu Bushmen from the Kalahari Desert, the sparse Khoe singers of Ladyfina, and a group of traditional healers led by Susan Henrichs. Then Moreira and a few friends have added some little bits and pieces in the studio in a

sort of "creative production." Not surprisingly, Moreira is really good at this; his contributions both enhance and expand the original recordings into very exciting areas. That said the originals are already astonishing — polo victim Anna Gbure reimagines a mouthful using a live line of can, and all four tracks of Khoe singing are otherworldly. Moreira himself employs stones, sheets of paper, cardboard boxes, floorboards and occasionally a drum. Not a bad track throughout.

Deepak Ram *Flute For Thought* 2000 BWA04 CD

Indian flute player Deepak Ram has a beautiful velocity tone and a fine sense of Indian phrasing not done picked up from his teacher, the legendary Haridwar Chaurasi. The flute stars here in a series of Indo-jazzy mixtures and modalities in gently upbeat contexts, recorded in London with help from kora player Tunde Jegede and percussionists Thomas Dyer, Anurag Bhowe and Nana Fado. Overall a bit New Agey for my taste, but warmed to a track called "Cabbage And Rice" when I realised it was dedicated to Deepak's mother for lovingly preparing his primary school lunch box. In the pipeline for Ram is an Indian classical project with Talvin Singh.

Amira Sagati *Al Bahr* 2000 BWA04 CD

More psychedelic far-room shakin' from Bamako Ali Bahr. This is the label's best CD cover yet, featuring warm, brown colours on a horizontal bench a row of lying Moroccan spectators. On the record itself, Amira's instruments and voice do battle above programmed beats and Adrian Sherwood's space echo. Poet Benjamin Zephaniah goes in for one track and Cheb Youssef handles the other vocals. Production is by the Moroccan team of Fidi K and Pat Jobbar. Musically I can't say I held my attention throughout, but when they're in full-on mode I have a lot of time for their trash dance stylings and Arab lyrics. Just a bit more weight at the bass end and then we can really chase those tropics.

Ravi Shankar *Sitar Concertos & Other 11 CD* 1998 PM CLASSICS 1143572655

Usually selected on the double pack — for the first time on CD — are the incursions. Shankar made into Western classical music, along with Yehudi Menuhin, Indian born composer Zubin Mehta, and wannabe hipster André Proust. The two Sitar

Concertos are odd bedders — The LSD's grudging, lead-footed attempts to keep pace with Alla Rakha's intricate tabla on No. 1 sound corny now, but No. 2's inimitable atmospheric writing. It's subtitled *A Garland Of Ragas* but makes for a more richly multifarious five instrumental ragas, are also thrown into the pot, making this a good bargain of mid-price. (Bibi Young)

Suna Of Aqqa *A Brief History Of SCA* 2000 BWA111 CD

The Suns have got their hats on, and they're coming out to play favourite tracks off their 13 albums since 1979. At their best the Suns work up a good tribal jig — a stormy drumfest topped by the likes of the sturdily bowed sarangi of Nicolas Pignel or the reedy shena of Kadir Durdesh, and usually underpinned by the bass guitar of co-producer Waddada. Other close guests include Rajnesh Sethi (Indian flute), Prince Far-John, Cooper Clarke and producer Adrian Sherwood. Youssef commutes a damn fine order (space) due. There are many moments of stoned splendour, but overall this isn't too convinced, and Jan Waddo does the swirling global dub thing with a more disciplined passion. However, if you want to crash the Aqqa party, the CD sleeve invites you to send in your musical or visual ideas to be considered via the Suns Of Aqqa Global Network. So get working on that virtual tin.

Tarat De Haidouks *Dumbala* 2000 BWA04 CD

The last time I saw this flamboyant Romanian gypsy group there were 12 of them on stage — they almost bring the village with them and you half expect to see dogs and children running in and out as they play. The performances are superb — passionate, earthy and unpolished, but full of musical soul. Raving voices and accorions are wheeled on by a clattering cymbal and bass. Outstanding are female vocalist Veronica Burescu and the pecked vocal chords of Hilda Cuciuc, who range to well into his 70s. The vast age range (20 to 78) is another endearing feature of the group. Recorded merely in their home village of Clujina, this is the Haidouks' third album and a few guests from neighbouring villages have been invited over, most astonishing is the wild rapping on the closing track by Napoleon, an urban gypsy from the ancient brotherhood of beer-tamers.

Various Artists *Wayyaji* CD

Goyatte, An Amazon Soundscape CD (WAVE) 2000 WAVE 024 110 CD Just north of Brazil are the Wayaja people living in dense tropical rainforest, and responsible for some of the strangest music in the world. This is a rich collection of field recordings made by Jean-Michel Bréaud, mostly in the late 1970s; it's a different selection from Bréaud's 1980 release on the Orstom label. Most striking are the yulle groups of gale bamboo clappers, harking and hooting to jangling string effects. Then there's a sequence of songs from the palmfruit harvested festival, several days of beer quaffing and masked dances. The whole village creates an eerie sonic sea of cries, flutes and whistling — when they sing it's a choral sighing. Pot dances and bird dances are accompanied by bamboo trumpets, clappers and flutes. Solo pieces demonstrate the mellotune, and a panga who scrapes a rattle on shell with his spare hand. Bréaud includes environmental recordings of the forest and riverbank at different times of day, a midnight jaking contest, and the sounds of men talking to each other 30 metres up in the palm trees. To give a pretty rounded picture of the Wayaja soundscape. Another fascinating album from this reliable label.

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Bernard Woma *Love At The Pit* 2000 BWA04 CD

Hardcore trash on traditional instruments from the threatened Bernard Woma. Ghana's foremost balafon (bkg xylophone) player. This is an awesomely intense live recording made in an outdoor bar serving Pils. A homemade mixer beat. Three musicians play balafon and drum, spluttering out a dense stream of raptorial rhythm that never lets up. Recorded Mark Seidenfeld there's a scene where people dance like mad in a bar to feverish free jazz. This Pils bar must be similar, because you can hear the whole place roaring and swirling and line dancing throughout, and to my irredeemably European ears the beat is too fast to locate anyway. The sound of Ghanaians seriously getting down on a Sunday afternoon.

Hozan Yamamoto/Wolfgang Mitterer *Masters Of Zem Shaltach* 2000 BWA04 CD

About 30 years ago Hozan Yamamoto played shatachaki at the Newport Jazz Festival. The most adventures of Japanese players, his jazz recordings with Gary Peacock and Yusef Lateef were successful because he's not struggling to play jazz on an unlikely instrument, but is improving on his own terms. It's typical of Yamamoto's open-mindedness to tackle a collaboration with an African master. Whether it really comes off is another matter. The playing by both is disappointingly conventional, with much pedestrian scrambling and not enough real attempt to find common ground between the Japanese flute and African organ — admittedly a tough assignment. Cheko Pinho contributes deep and resonant bass into an extra track.



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in brief jazz

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

Tim Berne Bloodcount

Discreetbox (Scheffler) 503.00/1000 (0)

Gleann Spearman's G-Force

Let It Go (New Music) 10.00/08 (0)

Berne's diving post-bop quartet comes together when it's going for the jugular, but frequently during this set the pace slackens the playing meanders and the solos sound anaemic. Despite the assertive rhetoric that characterises the package, too often and for too long it fails to hold the attention.

Spearman is a vibrant solo player with an unpretentious straightforward sound unperturbed only by occasional overblowing. G-Force comprises Luke Ellis on bass, Daniel Robinson on drums and guitarist Jason Rautner. Robinson's music shows Spearman's direct approach. There are occasional meditative moments, but let's go recorded in San Francisco in 1994, is essentially an amalgam of funky, playful, spicy jazz that makes few demands but feels just right.

Bluetiti Baritone Saxophone Group Live At The Knitting

Factory (Various) 10.00/05 (17/00)

Mike Westbrook Orchestra

Big Upbeat (New Music) 10.00/08 (0)

Harnett Bluetiti is a man with a mission. After his work with BAG and The World Saxophone Quartet he has nothing to prove personally, but, as he makes explicit on this live CD, he has undertaken to redress the workhorse role of Orfficial status to which the baritone has been consigned in contemporary saxophone playing. There is one better suited to full the task, and James Carter. It takes time, and time, and time. Harnett are the most able of assistants. Add Ronnie Burrage on drums and you have a marvellously funky celebration of the instrument, and an infectious uplifting set. For from seeming a freak line-up it sounds like an obvious, self-sustaining combination.

John Surman's baritone soaring over the finale of Westbrook's *Cosmos/Room* 315 was one of the high points of British jazz in the early 1970s when there appeared to be no limit to what Westbrook might achieve. Since those days his work has been substantial, but the genuine peaks have grown fewer and farther between. Westbrook has always known what he was doing, but recently he seems to settle for doing what he knows and his latest, *Big Band Cabaret*, while executed with knowing slickness, is entirely lacking in surprise. If there is any in *Big Upbeat*, it is not easily discernible. To make an earlier Westbrook title his urban pastiche seems here to have forsaken its obligation to pester

Carter/Collbourne/Tlaherty/

Malik/Mateen Resonance

2000 (New Music) 10.00/08 (0)

Jon Lloyd Sextet Praxis 1984-1989

Various (New Music) 10.00/08 (0)

Various documents a season that the participants felt worth preserving, despite it being recorded via a single two-track microphone. As with most free playing of this kind, it follows a cyclical pattern of rambling, gelling and gelling, subiding and drifting. Trumpeter Ralph Malik, best-known for his work with Cecil Taylor, is particularly impressive when he has stride. The music is far too loose to merit criteria for evaluating commercial releases, but enthusiasts for Malik or his colleagues will want it for the archive.

Praxis documents a performance of an altogether more cerebral kind. Saxophonist Lloyd wanted his composition incorporating layered elements, to stand apart from jazz, but the most convincing sequences of the hour-long piece are those closest to chamber jazz ensemble work and scoring. The sextet, featuring violin, cello, bass, trombone and percussion, plays with finesse throughout.

Matt Darriau & Paradox Trio

Flying At A Giant (Various) 10.00/08 (0)

A nod to John McLaughlin is the impetus and in the tribute. Those (Mahavishnu) otherwise this Balkan fusion closer to the Near Eastern pop of Okay Temiz. Darriau plays Bulgarian baglamas as well as sax. Brad Shepik wields a Portuguese guitar as well as the electric instrument. Five string cello and percussion complete the line-up. Though enjoyable, there lurks a suspicion that without the well of Orfficialism this music would appear conventional, even prosaic.

Robert Dick & Soldier String Quartet Jazz Standards (Various)

Various (New Music) 10.00/08 (0)

To record a version of Eric Dolphy's *Guadalupe* is a bold move for any flautist. To cover it a second time verges on folly. Yet Robert Dick has done exactly that, with impeccable results. He previously recorded the piece solo: here he is augmented by Dave Stryker's group, with Matt Dresner and Kerrie Driscoll on basses, and Ben Paroway on drums. Others help out as Dick turns his virtuosity to more Dolphy. Calixto Gonzalez, Shonté Hendrix and a solitary cello composition. Undoubtedly clever, yet this music, as played with contagious giddy relish.

Tyrone Hill Quartet Out Of The Box (New Music) 10.00/08 (0)

Thomas Chapin Trio Sky Piece

Various (Various) 10.00/08 (0)

Out Of The Box includes two compositions by Tyrone Hill, but his spirit is more widely pervasive in this music. Jason Dettel, on bass, is the only member of the quartet who hasn't served as an acolyte in the Arkestra, but he instantly has the loopy rhythm of 'Angels And Demons At Play' in synch with drummer Samara Celestial. Hill's trombone is characteristically exuberant, but the honours have to go to the septuagenarian composer of the opener, Marshall Allen, whose alto playing remains a joy. Sadly, Celestial died last November.

OHP have delivered a fitting tribute to one of their most pleasurable releases to date. Sky Piece is also a posthumous release, being Chapin's last recording before his tragic death in February. Many Rayone's with him on bass, Michael Sarr on drums for this program, yet dazzling confirmation of the man's exceptional talent. On alto and soprano sax and a variety of flutes, Chapin demonstrates astonishing resourcefulness with regard to technique and sense of structural possibility. As commentators regularly observed, he had broad command of the jazz legacy and virtuosity to match.

Rajesh Mehta/Vojtech/Ireana Havel A Day In Benedict House

Foundation (New Music) 10.00/08 (0)

Mehta is a trumpet virtuoso who has studied composition with Anthony Braxton, and recorded with Paul Lovens. Here he is teamed with two Czech musicians, playing cello and viola da gamba. But as important as the personnel is the setting, two resonant chapels in a monastery. The improvisations are directed to sound the acoustic space, with which Mehta had become familiar during three years of exploration. His own playing is to the fore, utilising the instrument straight and customised. The pieces are less meditative, more varied than comparable projects in deep listening performed by Rauline Owerens and Stuart Dempster. In fact, this release is more likely to ring bells (Tibetan naturally) with listeners who remember Paul Horn's excursions inside the Taj Mahal and the Great Pyramid.

Sten Sandell Behind The Chords (Various) 10.00/08 (0)

Anders Jormin Eight Pieces

Various (Various) 10.00/08 (0)

Sandell is an inventive musician, who has worked in a number of fruitful contexts, notably the improvising trio Gush. His fifth solo album, comprising a suite in five acts, is less immediately appealing than much of his previous work. His unaccompanied vocalising seems pallid by comparison with more specialised current exponents. In the past, he

has collaborated with David Moss and Saarikko Namchikyo. Other movements feature percussive flourishes characterised by a kind of fractured lyricism. His brooding excursions on organ and harmonium are more intriguing, but overall this is a disappointing release from a fine musician.

Bassett Jormin belongs to a more conventional strand of Swedish music. His *Eight Pieces* is a resuscitation of an album recorded ten years ago. The participants, including Bobo Sorenson on piano, play with reeled professionalism. Much of the music sounds as if it should accompany a TV movie set in Manhattan, undetectable and entirely unexceptional.

Matthew Shipp Trio The Multitubulation Table (New Music) 10.00/08 (0)

Mark Springer Eyes On The

Various (Various) 10.00/08 (0)

The Multitubulation Table is another evidence of Shipp's extraordinary architectonic imagination. It is framed from a set of interlocking pieces, incorporating the standards 'Autumn Leaves', 'The 'C' Jam Blues' and 'Take The A Train'. His playing is monumental, yet it swings in accordance with the Ellingtonian imperative, assisted by the tensile strength of William Parker's bass and Susie Ibarra's drums. The ambition of jazz piano has been invoked to educate Shipp's approach; his phenomenal ability is his own, but this performance shares the weighty impact of McCoy Tyner's chordal blocking and fabulously complex harmonic sense.

Eyes is offered as inaugurating a new genre, no less 'sensual music'. His Sonnerig evolved a new approach to solo piano, a poise that carries him beyond the intensely physical music of Charles Mingus. Poise? Yes, no. This is bordered up 'sensuality', too easy to enter even Harold Budd's fleshly school of soft focus composition. Springer's old group, Ray, Rag & Ranc, are a distant memory, for sure.

Sweethearts In A Drugstore Sweethearts In A Drugstore (Various)

Various (Various) 10.00/08 (0)

Veteran Bermudian bassist Alan Silva contributes admirably discreet synthesizer to the sound of this curiously named improvising ensemble. The project was invited by Danish percussionist PD Jorgensen, who is joined here by compatriot Peter Fiss on bass, Pat Thomas and Phil Durant combining their electronics with piano and violin respectively, and Johannes Bauer on trombone. The live recording has a slightly reverberant acoustic which adds to the homogeneity of the group sound, although Bauer steps out at regular intervals with some pungent articulations. The blending of acoustic and electronic instrumental resources, broadly in the tradition of Musica Elettronica Viva, produces notably purposeful and evocative results. (J)

multi media

Rob Young clicks through the latest Webzines



Contd

israelit/daigruv.html
This German language site is definitely worth a few clicks, just for the supereasy quality of its interface. A couple of red-herring animation screens lead you in, then the site loads up a facsimile of the Mac CD player window onto a facsimile of the Web browser, from which you select the articles with the aid of a pull down menu. Those options include a lengthy piece on black sci-fi from Ulrich Gurner, interviews with Silver Apples, Simeon, Nicolas Collins and David Grubbs, plus plenty more dense, intellectual pieces on HipHop, electronic culture and general cybertheory.

Disquiet

www.ris3d.com
In the US, Marc Weidenbaum has been showcasing articles on ultimate friendly subjects into Tower's in-house mag *Ruze* for some years now. On *Disquiet*, his on-line archive, there are few tabs and whistles to get in the way of the prose. He covers the downtown electroacoustic wasteland from Nehai Tunas's DJ Food and Azohar's concrete composer Francis Dhomont to Gavin Bryars' US dub and Pagine Giallo's. The original *Ruze* pieces were short, tightly written profiles concerning specific topics. Food discusses his comic work for David Byrne. Richard James is (usually) listed on the subject of future music interfaces. Weidenbaum also provides links to his complete interview transcripts — compare and contrast with the print versions *ru3*. And how much interesting material regularly hits the spike. As an extra service to browsers, Marc includes an ongoing bibliography of books relating to Ambient and electronic music.

EHX

www.ehx.com/ehx
The enigmatic Cosmic Crohier presents Electronic music in the capital — the capital in this case being Edinburgh, the jewel of Caledonia. "Watching not seeing" is the latter

curious motto behind the site — wouldn't it read better the other way round? The Crohier aligns himself with wandering Scots landscapes of old and somehow traces the line to such present-day Scottish bedroom Electronica types as Neil Landstrumm and Blonds Of Canada. As it goes, one of the site's highlights is probably the most comprehensive interview with the Edinburgh based Boards' yet, where they drop tantalising hints about their diyncronic and no doubt utterly bogus cosmology of the Turquoise Hexagon Sun. The rest of the site is a what's on guide to underground club events in Scotland and doubles as a shop window for the live photography of one GG.



juxtaposition

www.furriel.com/jtop/jtop.html
Lots of articles here on a wide range of New Music, with emphasis on Just Intonation and microtones, but also with a strong penchant for the exploits of (former) Prog rockers (there's a recent live review of Bill Bruford and Tony Levin's Upper Extremities at New York's Knitting Factory). Webmaster David Boardley has his ear to the ground in the States — he reviews a live soundtrack to the Murnau film *The Lost Laugh* by Newland leader Dean Drummond, performed on the instruments of Harry Patch, and he traces the interface of gamelan on the Fourth World fusions of Bill Alves. Other names that raise an eyebrow among the ever growing archive of profiles, live reviews and summations include Cluster, Eric Deep Listening Band and Ornette

Coleman, and there's the odd side trip into the world of multimedia installation by the likes of sound sculptor Harry Belafonte. Plenty to mull over for browsers trying to escape the summer sun.

Obsessive Eye

www.msn.com/mr/mr.com/obsessive.html
Fired up with a confrontational, pro-distortion manifesto straight outta Hanna, *Obsessive Eye* began life in print three years ago as a British based chunk of site tracing an Alternative Ancestry of visionary poprock/punkists, taking up the mantle of Simon Reynolds, who contributed a couple of articles to Eyes 2 and 3. Since then editor Dave Howell has migrated cross-country to London and hooked up with Fat Cat Records as an A&R scout, while the magazine has found a virtual home on the World Wide Web. While not exactly an on-line edition, the site offers a taste of several interview-based pieces with Labradford, Apex Twin and lapised Electronica duo Insides, and gives details of how to order back issues of the print versions (all three of them). Plenty of manifesto here, but the dearth of editorial content can get frustrating.

Perfect Sound Forever

www.furios.com/perfect/index.html
This eclectic American site — named after the early marketing tagline for CDs propagated by Sony and Philips — is the business. Check the What's New page: interviews with John Foley, The Fall and Neil's Michael Barker, and a perceptive critical swipe at the limitations of so-called experimental 90s post-rock. The PSF archive is a vast store of Q&A interviews and thinkpieces. Some examples of the latter: American Instruments: How They Changed America? "Music As A Deadly Weapon" Deep In The Heart Of Tulsa — "The DJ As Shaman" An overview of French rock by Matthew Martens assesses *The Wire* among others of ignoring the subject: obviously he didn't catch our survey of current Gallic avant rock (*The Wire* 165). The editorial team also runs an uncritical but comprehensive Howlin' Wolf site.



Section

www.section.com
An underground music resource — not the first to exist on the Net by a long chalk, but of course, but when you've got contributions the likes of arch transpositional walking encyclopedia Lance C. McGinnis, you know you're in good hands. However, a lack of fact-checking and subbing errors a potentially better site in a lengthy Scanner Q&A. Robin Rimbaud is mis-transcribed in a reference to "John Kay's 4.33". On the positive side, Section contains a substantial database for labels, distributors, stores, promoters and publications relating to non-mainstream music.



Urban Sounds

www.urband Sounds.com
One of the band designed zines on the Web, Urban Sounds carries out a strong brand identity through imaginative use of colour, background graphics and fonts, which doesn't seem to affect loading times. *us3* also has on-line DJ mixes in RealAudio, and the best review section of this bunch, with separate areas for Ambient, House, downtempo, jazz and experimental releases. All pretty current, too, and with the bonuses of CD cover art and audio clips from selected tracks. The interviews currently posted are with indie Electronic meddlers Boston Welt and S+J (old) ds Douglas, Benford, and a vivid anecdotal review of an interdimensional Transmissions Valentine's Night party at Detroit's St. Andrew's Hall.

members@aol.com/ishort/love/
index.html

Here's plenty of jazz on the Near most of its variety and delirious. This celebration of the comic music of late-period John Coltrane, Pharoah Sanders and et al is therefore extra lovely: it's a private collection. Well-known (see Scott Herst) 'tosses up being a Santoral priest and the graves he's added might into the road that winds back from, for instance, the notorious infidelity to Herodotus and Yonlus magic ceremonies you can jump off the intro page to explanations of both these religious. Pages devoted to John and Alice Coltrane, Pharoah Sanders, vocalist Leon Thomas and McCoy Tyner carry discographies and capsule reviews of their recordings, with pull-down lists of their songs and personnel. Herst also provides a list of other related records, and his analyses of the music combine knowledge and enthusiasm with accessibility. 'Some called it free, some called it angry,' he writes, aware of the conflicting claims on the hottest Free Music.

www.omegat.com/subscribe
or thewire

Set up in April this year, this is a mailing list set up to discuss the music covered in this magazine. Founded by Isthmian music fan Davis Ford, its brief is "to use the Wire's coverage of musical topics as a launching point for interesting discussion." The list is not affiliated with The Wire, and Ford promises a hands-off approach to moderating the contributions, so it has the potential to become a free and frank exchange of views on the widest possible range of musical issues. You can choose to receive postings as individual mails or in digest format when you register at the URL address above.

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John McEneaney gets wired at Test One. Inset: Jira O'Rourke, below: the crucible



Test One

UK, Sheffield Kelham Island Industrial Museum

In a perfect distillation of Vivaldi's law of test action, Wrennie Powerbookworms Farmers Manual are spitting their fidgety noises over the chugging pistons and hissing convection currents of a 1905 Rover Don steam engine high as a ten-foot house. Every hour, the 25,000 horsepower engine cranks into action, foaming and whirling. The Farmers do little more than prod their keyboards and idly scratch their noses, but volume for volume the grouse monster can't compete.

The infernal machine is the one roaring constant during Test One's nine-hour music marathon. Exhibits in the Kelham Island Museum, itself a converted factory, remind you that only 150 years ago on this site teenage apprentices, wages were withheld and employees regularly perished from inhaling pulverized metal. Today it's a cobbled



timely day out, the pig-iron blast furnaces lie dormant, and the space has become a crucible: testbench and sled-pan for a day of prototype Electronica and post-rock performances, improvisations and DJ sets.

As the audience begins acclimating to the space, the skies are clearing and Warp headman Steve Beckitt is spinning low-key Electro in the courtyard. The organizers are propping their eyes open — less than 12 hours ago, they were in London watching the Berlin/Düsseldorf trio To Rococo Rot at Warp's Blech club. Under the glass skylights of the main live area, it's TBR who kick off the day's live activity. There's nothing of the night about their music: it's a sound of transparency, observation, glossy clarity. Ronit Impelli's livid drum-kick's sound out the sequenced corners of the sound like traffic-calm curves on urban pavements. One new track is Bush Of Ghosts-bunkily doped with meandering notes and frozen-sawed Hancock-like keyboard flows. A freaky cancer erupts from

the packed audience into the berth in front of the stage. I'm sure TBR would love this, a sticky molecule detaching itself from the homogenized mass.

Next up are the eagerly anticipated Turn On, originally a studio collaboration between Serekiab's Tim Gane and Sean O'Hagan of The High Llamas. At short notice, they've assembled a rolick of indie survivors from the past ten years. Mary Hansen (check) from Stereolab on percussion and "to-be-be" vocals, Lali drummer Andy Ramsey, Moonmaker Dave Colligan on sampler and bango (and of course, O'Hagan himself is a veteran of The Underbelly). Overlaid with a Neil-like two-chord boogie, the set swiftly degenerates into a veyolistic half hour as technical hitches lock away all their supports. Loops are jumping, the drummer can't lock on, and Colligan is manually triggering breadboards that refuse to fit the mold. Gane looks ready for a fight. O'Hagan's bango grin bespeaks the hope that the group can just jam

Bang On A Can All-Stars: Music For Airports

UK: Stansted Airport

"Ambient Music," proclaimed Brian Eno "must be able to accommodate many levels of listening attention without enforcing one in particular: it must be as ignorable as it is interesting." The statement comes from his sleeveless for Music For Airports, the 1978 album that effectively launched Ambient (even if it took another ten years to really take off). And so it was that a cohort of journalists were bussed through London, past the toxic waste ground from which the Millennium Dome stretches skywards, and into the luminous glass cube of Stansted Airport to listen, as deliberately as possible, to the UK's first live airport performance of music based on one of the most misremembered records of the past 20 years. Eno present alongside Robert Wyatt and Rivet Dowers, his co-composers of the first of Airports' four tracks, may have seemed as much as Bang On A Can All-Stars, the New Music troupe that grew out of New York's Bang On A Can festival created by David Lang, Michael Gordon and Julia Wolfe settled into position, he urged people to move around during the performance. But if Eno put his feet where his mouth was and went walkabout, only a few followed his lead.

Most significantly, it was certainly the hypnotic power of the music, which kept us in our seats, which was ambitiously Eno shot Eno's. The three BOAC composers, joined by no ensembles' claretos. Even Zoom, had transcribed Eno's original music, effectively converting its electronic composition into an orchestral one. In the process, they highlighted a real space for Eno's pendulant harmonics. Percussion parts mostly performed on a glockenspiel sounding like a glass harmonica, highlighted the timeless

modal quality of the pieces. Different aspects of each composer shone through their transcriptions. As someone who delights in unusual sound sources, Lang added analogue tape noise to his chosen piece. "1/2" For his take of "2/2" Zoom introduced solo woodwind that threatened at times to break into a klaxon tune. Gordon's version of "1/1" and Wolfe's "2/1" both widened Eno's original space dramatically. Indeed it sounded like they'd misheard the airport especially for its acoustics. Arguably, Lang et al had engaged in a homage, both playful and genuine, which in its execution had negated the premise of Ambient music. Others might argue that BOAC had created something beautiful, a lovely thing that underlined the emotional capacities of Eno's electronic original. Eno himself spoke afterwards of how Airports had grown into a full being as a result of BOAC's intervention. A magnificent remark, perhaps.

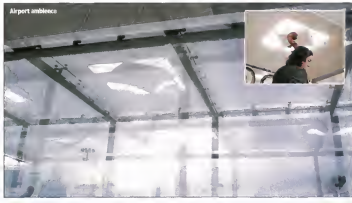
As a large scale sound installation with orchestra, or a concert where listeners were encouraged to wander either literally or mentally, it was an odd event by any reckoning. Hidden deep in the hollow of the Essex countryside, Sir Norman Foster's airport building seemed to be in a place of its own, another green world? The audience was joined by passengers, hurrying to and from their flights, mobile phones riled discreetly, airport announcements informed us that someone was late for an Oslo flight. Outsiders were curious: the spectacle of them watching us watching BOAC was mildly disorientating. — but it was striking how little fuss or diversion the event caused. Maybe international air passengers are regularly greeted with musical ensembles of various hues. As it was, we were wondering what to do next, mired as we were in punk experiences not withstanding by the sit-still-and-pay-attention procedure of concert



eloquent. It felt like I wandered off to peruse the Ambient section of Stansted's record shop.

For his part Eno professed his disinterest in what passes for Ambient in clubland. Ambient music, he stressed, was environmental without being debated in the process. The self-effacing nature of Ambient music means that it has no intention beyond an environmental function. Not in the way and the magnification of the listener, music is always rewritten and personalized. BOAC finished with a surprise transcription of "Everything Happens With The Night" from Another Green World. Eno looked fairly flushed yet rather pleased even when sections of the audience sang along quietly under their breaths.

LOUISE GRAY



Airport ambience

on whatever man. But they're just not up to the task, when they attempt to solder over the cracks, the show becomes a meaningless, painful manipulation of empty musical signals.

Apparently Turn On got it together for the last number, but we'd already escaped to watch guitarist Doug McCombs, of Tortoise, alias Brokenback, duetting with the Engine. This is a welcome, affecting fall in the pace of the day's events, the searing volume of the shards, slides and thrashed notes of "Returns To The Orange Grove" conjures the ambience of an American 1950s public information film on the industriousness of the blue collar worker: as the hyphenated starts rolling and steam and water droplets hiss off the pumping brass rods.

There's a World War II bomb in the westside, a ten-ton Grand Slam 25-foot high designed to bury itself in the ground at high velocity and cause an earthquake 60 feet under. And here's a Birmingham duo launching their own sonic weaponry. Certain

on location



To Rococo Rot

Beyond All Reasonable Doubt, featuring fundamentalist dromemaker Mick Harris of Scorn with Surgeon's Tony Chik! Sade by side they sit, manning their samplers, FX racks and mixing desk like a pair of nuclear silo operators. The sound is a beasties: Afro Rastafarian motor rush. Harris occasionally leans back in his chair, smirking at his handwork, before shooting forward to launch a pre-emptive salvo of high-frequency scuds that permeate above the broiling drones. The former Napalm Death drummer riffs that rush; the noise that closes acts the unbearable horror, and he's found it in the multitrack, resurgent, done but the medium remains inimitable.

The Deacons are a hastily converted duo featuring another Tortoise stalwart, John

Milk, and the lovable figure of Jim O'Rourke. Each standing behind a pile of museum keyboards, the pair fire off improvised blobs and drizzles, crackling waves and flutters. After several minutes O'Rourke hitches a note on an adjacent drum kit and takes the drone for a gallop. Then it all falls apart. Johnny suddenly decides to rewrite his entire patchbay and spends about 20 minutes dicking about with his spaghetti of knobs and staring in disbelief at the floor. Jimmy's forced to fill in with a floodbox of samples. Oval-style textures interspersed with warm analogic manipulations, Hoog stabs and flutest electronics. When his partner begins looking anxiously at his watch, O'Rourke silently orders him back to the kit, dropping a gorgeous acoustic guitar loop into the mix

which he proceeds to dress with a sprinkling of electric piano. The high decibels tug at your heels, shakes burrow through your marrow. O'Rourke is playing rimshot-happy bossa nova, but the hallucinatory, Plamonic-like conjunction of sounds makes this anything but familiar ground.

The hat falls black, and it's several minutes before anyone realizes Autechre have begun their set — they still seem to be packing boxes away. You could watch a silent video of every single Autechre show and barely register any difference, but the music never happens by rote. With every performance, Sean Booth and Rob Brown seem ever more transfixed, and ensnared by the equipment piled on the table like so much bric à brac. Once they hit a groove, their heads start wobbling and they move. Chaplin-like, tossed about on the electromagnetic tides, Booth is suckered by a Nord signal processor, Brown is doing dental work on a ring, toothpick-controlled sequencer. After more than an hour of tightly compressed synapse-shaping beats, it ends where the day began, in a hiss of steam — only this time it's digital.

ROB YOUNG

Terrastock II USA, San Francisco Cluster Ave. Stages

In retrospect, perhaps the best thing about punk rock was that it ended. Having done just about enough to obliterate the tyranny of musical technique and to dissolve the perceived social gap between club audience and performer, punk performed a valuable

social function: It cleared the way for a variety of more aesthetically pleasing post-punk musics to exist in a relatively classless underground environment. The Terrastock II festival — and its first edition, held last year in Rhode Island — was developed inside such a milieu. The 1998 Terrastock was held in a vast warren of soundstages hidden among the industrial wasteland below San Francisco. The hangar-like venue is usually used for producing TV commercials. Though it has also hosted the odd rave, this was purportedly the first time live music has been staged here.

Terrastock was enmeshed in the name of *Atlanmac*: *Terrapace*, a lexicon whose overall brunt is psychedelic, albeit as defined through their own personal and non-generic set of reference points. It embraces noise and pop and rock and folk as stylistic equals, drawing connections between generations and artists that might have escaped less obsessive chroniclers. Thus the staff of the Terrapace and those who sell with them are about as perfect a set of programmers you could get for a festival with such a pan-psychodic sweep.

Spread over three days, Terrastock drew its strength from a variety of sources mirrored in the unabashed eclecticism of the performers. Artists included brilliant acid-spouting oddballs like Mick Farren, who still has command of the movies that made him the king of London's drug-soaked beds; set back in the days of The Deviants, Rip Montgomery and Akalaka Kalanika, founding members of New Zealand's The Rip and 9th Group, respectively, couched guitar splurge and woe after a fashion that justified their fame as strong gods of today's sub-underground. Mainstream. Peit, a trio of chaotic, high-volume drone-welchers from Vigna, raised massive walls of Lo Monte Young-crusting sustain with a force: their VHF recordings have only hinted at. And some spoken word stuff from Eddie Shaw, formerly of the legendary GI punk group The Monks, roasting from his own savage history of the group, shifted the terrain to the wilderness that was Germany in the 60s.

Unbelievably for a festival, Terrastock ran on schedule. Most acts were held to strict 45 minute sets, the music switching back and forth between two rooms for up to 14 hours a day. This seemed to put all performers on notice that their sloth would not be tolerated. On the contrary, several excellent sets were also uniquely multi-generational in a way rarely witnessed in pop music. Tom Rabe is a mythic figure on the American acid-folk scene. The nine albums he cut under his own name and with Poarl's Before Sieme (including two on ESP) are revered in many circles as the most crystalline distillation of drug-inspired sunshine. For Terrastock, Rapp was joined by the electronic guitar of The Alchemists, Paul Simmons, which gave his music the heavenlydreamed whosht it has over had. The Alchemists' own set featured Siemeon — the primitive synth-doodling genius of The Silver Apples — who added a whole layer of bubbling electronics, which played on even



Kendra Smith

when he dived into the crowd after his hit. Simeon is such a perfect cross between Brian May and Alan Vega that, watching him, it becomes obvious how much Suicide must have conspired up after seeing the Apples' rare gig at Max's Kansas City in the late 60s. Except it took two of Suicide to do it.

Tom Rapp was also involved in one of the most gorgeously brain-frying sets of the festival. It involved a suite of music that arose out of collaborations between Damon & Naomi, formerly of Galaxie 500 and Magic Hour — each of them bastions of American underground intelligence — and Misaki Batoh and Michio Kurihara of Ghost, who are perhaps Japan's most evocative psychedelic masters ever. Damon & Naomi began the set, playing a karate sorta-folk duo reminiscent of Richard and Phyllis Farnia. They were joined by Batoh and Kurihara, who added bursts of wild electricity and spatial weird. Rapp continued on vocals for a bit, then the two Ghosts assumed the stage by themselves, producing golden wads of classic Bay Area trip-nose. The sonic flow was like a stunning microscopic tour of folk rock's evolution from 1965-67. It left the crowd speechless.

Probably the most exciting performance of Terrastock was Kendra Smith's. Smith has lived in rural seclusion since she jumped ship from Opal in the 1980s. Scheduled to perform with her group, The Guild Of Temporal Adventurers, Smith was the only member of her troupe to actually make the stage. Dressed like Granny Gracklegrey, she switched between harmonium, bohemian tar (a homemade gourd-based guitar with six doubled sets of strings) and acoustic six string and sounded something like an organic version of early Nico. Smith's presence had a superb sense of otherness out of which shone beacons of light, frequently Syd Barrett-like in their disturbing intensity. Playing material from her 4AD album of a few years back and The Guild's sole EP, she was nothing less than magical. Pray to your favourite Druid god that her current retreat into the redwood glades won't last too long.

There were several other highlights. The incredible time-sowing New York guitarist Loren Mazzacane Connors did a glowing set of guitar improvisations. Mudhoney used to be the only Stooges cover outfit who mattered; here they blared out something akin to Fleetwood Mac's blues rambles circa 1970. Grumble Grumble and Windy & Carl, both magnificent Midwest generators of textured drone, sprayed the dark with loud, long lunar notes. The Major Stars and Primalord Undermind spit out psychedelic guitar mosh with form-wrestling abandon. Aousa Plane, a mysterious, Pennsylvania-based trio who reportedly never play live, broke their lifetime habit by performing stringless-motors reminiscent of The Feelies' almost-forgotten post-song constructions of 1980. Philadelphia bong-riffers Bardo Pond, who have produced some intensely smoked recordings on Drunken Fish, dropped some of their mysto-flute-wobbling in order to lurch through an Arnon

Dool-style drug groove of a very high order.

With the future of Terrastock in doubt, it's hard to imagine as wonderful a weekend of sub-underground sounds coming together under any other banner.

BYRON COLEY

Diamanda Galás: Concert For The Damned

UKC London Queen Elizabeth Hall

Diamanda Galás has various modes of presentation, none of them easy. She has staged her AIDS trilogy as a multi-voiced one-woman opera; she's sung her *Plague Plass* in houses of the very same Lord she has elsewhere cajoled, pleaded with and vilified; and she's also conceived an experimental radio piece on extreme sexual terror. Though this Concert For The Damned reprised the song recital format she originally devised for her first 'conventional' song collection *The Singer*, and 1996's *Malediction And Prayer* performances (the latter just released as a live CD), which featured Galás alone at the

piano, it was scarcely less exacting. Yet it also allowed a glimmer of light in to relieve the otherwise unrelenting bleakness that characterises much of her art.

Galás is a unique song interpreter, and her choice of material allows her voice licence to explore all points between rage, tenderness and untrammelled despair. Her approach to blues is free of any bogus authenticity. Instead she brings to it a personal musical vocabulary, introducing elements from her Greek roots and her training with Berio and Xenakis. More crucially, she really means it. What emerges is a very personal hybrid, at times close to the spirit and form of Andalusian Deep Song.

Her flexible, desirous piano playing shadows, counterpoints or internalises the mood and the meanings of the songs with ominous bass rumbles, jazzy inflections and a style of blues phrasing that hovers on the edge of atonality. On Son Heuser's "Death Letter", she moved from delft piano syncope to fragmenting keyboard lines, as the singer's disbelief at the fate of her lover passes from hope to hopelessness.

resignation and grief. The Supremes' hit "My World Is Empty Without You" has rarely sounded so forlorn as in Galás's rendition, while "The Thrill Is Gone" was driven by her anti-bel canto shrieks.

Her simple concert staging — the singer clad in black at the piano, on a darkened stage, with few spotlights — effectively commands you to listen to the songs with a singleness of purpose equal to her performance of them. Her tour de force is Willie Dixon's "Inane Asylum", which catalogues the despair of discovering her lover's been sent to one. Galás turns Dixon's blues into an astonishing monodrama, running the vocal gamut from malevolent cawing, supplication, sweet blues moaning and speaking-in-tongues delirium. For her adaptation of Baudelaire's "Abel And Cain", she mirrored her vocal ululations with piano arpeggios. Other highlights included her setting of the Pasolini poem "Supplica A Mia Madre", and the Greek hashish music of the rombetika song "Kegome Kegome". An overwhelming experience.

PIKE BARNES

Diamanda Galás: damned good



print run

New music books: John Coltrane special, plus some strong voices



Coltrane with Eric Dolphy, New York, 1961

John Coltrane: His Life And Music

By Lewis Porter

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS, \$19.95

In 1982 the One Mind Evolutionary Transitional Church of Christ in San Francisco became part of the African Drumbeat Church, and John Coltrane was officially accepted as a saint. The Sunday ritual of the church centers around Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*. This is just the most extreme example of his elevation from bebop tenor player to spiritual guide and leader. *A Love Supreme*, Coltrane's best-selling album, has been an inspiration, musical and mystical, to musicians from all traditions. But Coltrane was a jazz revolutionary first and foremost. And as Lewis Porter argues in this definitive biography, "There's no way to be a jazz musician since Coltrane without knowing his music."

Porter has researched Coltrane's odyssey with unprecedented thoroughness, and discusses the music with unrivaled authority. He writes, "If I fully explained how I arrived at

each sentence in the book, it would fill several volumes." You better believe it. He supplies an astonishingly exhaustive chronology of Coltrane's own performances and interviews for the recordings, go to Yasuhiro Fujiki's *John Coltrane: A Discography And Musical Biography*. Porter is very far on earlier chronicles, but none can match his 300-page biography for depth and reliability.

The backdrop is jazz's heroic age. Style changes in the music happened with swiftness and rapidity, with only a few years between major developments. A linear perspective is tempting, working to a premise on the ever-increasing freedom that culminated in the music of Albert Ayler, and Coltrane's *Ascension* of 1965. By Coltrane's death in 1967, there's a case for claiming most bases had been covered. The outlines of his story are clear in Porter's narrative. Coltrane had a long apprenticeship, before coming to prominence when he joined Miles Davis in 1955. Within five years he had nudged ahead of Sonny Rollins as the most important saxophonist in jazz. His rather

disjointed but effective commitment to the jazz quintet albums was capably a (later) through solo on the smoky arrangements of *Round Midnight*—a jukebox hit in his own neighbourhood. Porter (July 8, 1933—) passage with Thelonious Monk's book and the escape from drug addiction. Coltrane's mastery of rapid-fire bebop techniques reached its apogee on the 1959 *Blue Train* and *Giant Steps*.

At the same time he was developing the modal approach of *Kulu D'Bus*, *Impressions*, scales not chords. This became the rhythmic sound of the quartet with McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones, culminating in *A Love Supreme*. The first drummer Pete La Roca who worked with Coltrane in 1960 put the change like this: "The band got a better groove when things were modal. We got a heavy groove on 'Equinox'—things were relaxed, whereas we were kind of hustling and chasing ourselves on that stuff from *Giant Steps*, where it had all those chords. The critics raved, and Porter quotes one Don Nelson of *New York Daily News*: 'Run, do not

run!' In *Impressions*, Coltrane's quartet played the jazz gallery. The reason, as Porter says, a tenor saxophonist who has the future coming out of his horn."

But Coltrane was moving on, and he was soon too futuristic for many critics. With the pull of free jazz pioneered by Ornette Coleman and Albert Ayler, Coltrane eventually lost Tyner and Jones, who claimed they couldn't hear themselves play above the walls of noise generated by Coltrane's often augmented later groups, and who didn't get on with the second drummer Rashied Ali, but as Porter notes, they weren't free jazzers. The new group featured Alice Coltrane, the saxophonist's second wife, and another sax player, Pharoah Sanders. Maybe Porter's pessimistic assessment of the commercial potential of free jazz is right.

Over a steady beat, one can be very adventuresome and still hold an audience take away the best, and you lose most of your listeners." It's hard to avoid thinking that the dark, intense music of Coltrane's last two years came from a man who sensed he did

not have much time left, though he seemed in reasonable health up to a few months before his death from liver cancer at the age of 40, even though he was very overweight and taking colossal amounts of LSD (Porter quotes Miles Davis claiming that it was Coltrane's use of acid which eventually killed him).

The first third of the book covers the period of Coltrane's obscurity before he joined Miles in 1955. By the 60s things are moving rapidly, and perhaps because events are more familiar, the book doesn't feel so massively detailed. Porter uncovers a mass of new and fascinating material on Coltrane's connections with bebop. He cut some discs with a group of now forgotten players in 1946. Miles Davis heard them and "was knocked out by Coltrane's playing", nearly ten years before he eventually hired him. Coltrane also played on occasion with Charlie Parker. By 1948 the pattern of his "personal problems" was set. His then bandleader Eddie "Coenraad" Vinson said Coltrane's problems were not serious — "He was drinking and eating lots of sweets." But these go with Coltrane's attempts to get off or stay off heroin. Along with constant practicing, sweets were an obsession that caused weight and dental problems — serious for a homie.

Porter is a music professor at Rutgers University, and musical analysis is his forte. Non-musicians will skip over the plentiful musical examples, and it might have been better to for a diversion into "life" and "Miles rather than an integrated text. But the gist of Porter's case is important. He argues that for all its abandon, Coltrane's work was always tightly organized. Elvin Jones explained: "Even though it gave an impression of freedom, it was basically what I thought out and highly disciplined." Coltrane used a richer tone and fuller vibrato in what was a genuine late style. But Porter argues, "The motives that Coltrane used are not so different from the ones he used before 1965 — because he's playing without a steady beat, it may be hard to recognize their similarity."

It's useful to compare Porter's book with one of its few rivals among recent jazz biographies, Donald Clarke's *Life of Billie Holiday, Whining On The Floor* — also very fully researched if not perhaps on the heroic scale of Porter's book. There's a relaxed stylishness to Clarke's work, and a brilliant knack of bringing the music alive. But Porter shows a lot of good sense on how jazz is created, and has memorable insights of his own. Don's 50s music, he says, was a dialogue "between the world of light and purity and theatrical, and the guts and intensity of the blues and the black American experience." Porter convincingly argues that Coltrane developed the blues in an original way — especially in the form of the minor blues — but kept a downhome feel. "Coltrane was a serious blues player, and his blues pieces reflect a desire to get back to a primal mood, and away from the emotionally lighter, harmonically more complex blues of the boppers," Clarke

offers a more profound psychological portrait, but then Billie Holiday was a more complicated personality, as was Miles Davis.

Miles was his whole life. But there are puzzling aspects to Coltrane. Apparently he never had a bad word to say about anyone. If many writers and listeners commented on the paradox of the shy, gentle man playing angry music, Coltrane himself didn't see it that way. There was a determination underlying his gentleness, and Porter traces his obsessionalism to the early death of his father. But the feeling you get after reading this book is that he was essentially a simple man. For its insight and its exhaustive research, this is an awesome achievement — the definitive biography at least for our generation and, surely, several to come.

ANDY HAMILTON

John Coltrane And The Jazz Revolution Of The 1960s

By Frank Koltay

PANTHER POK 5.15 45

Black Music White Business

By Frank Koltay

PANTHER POK 5.10 45

Frank Koltay published *Black Modernism And The Revolution in Music* in 1970. Dedicated to the memory of both John Coltrane and Malcolm X, Koltay's book rang with the Williamsonist stridency of free jazz: a rare example of criticism rising to the music. In the early 60s, tensions that had bubbled behind bebop and hard bop burst into the open. Although it was Archie Shepp, Cecil Taylor and Bill Dixon who made the explicit political statements, Koltay centred his book on The John Coltrane Quartet, arguing there was something political in the very form Coltrane's music was taking. What made Koltay's book special was his ability to interpret the social content of formal innovation. His historical rigor is a bracing alternative to the casual urbanity of most jazz writing.

By the early 70s, Koltay's days as a journalist and sleeve-note writer

were numbered: he'd denounced too many vested interests, perhaps. Once his star was eclipsed alongside the music he championed, he ended up teaching history in an academic backwater, where he wrote a thesis on Harry Truman's war scare of 1948 (published as a book in 1995). Meanwhile, attempts to publish an updated version of *Black Nationalism* founded in the 80s, when neo-classicism and yamposet made the scene for jazz, and Reagan-Thatcherite economics swept the globe. Perhaps a harbinger of political time, he finally secured a new edition in 1996, by which time he'd changed the title added and deleted chapters, improved the prose and separated out a 140 page polemic against other critics into a book on its own called *Black Music: White Business. Illuminating The History And Political Economy Of Jazz*. Koltay died in 1997, but Panther — his original press and surviving outlet of American Trotskyists — have nevertheless published his books.

As a critic, Koltay is refreshingly unmodish direct and matter-of-fact. A Marxist, he discards the Stalinist doctrine that history is the result of blind economic laws, instead highlighting the particular circumstances that ignite an individual's creativity. For him jazz is a flowering of an African sense of rhythm — finely divided physically but "passed down through cultural practice. He encounters Martin Williams for arguing the black race is genetically predisposed to rhythmic genius, pointing out that 'race' is not a scientific

category. Worse, natural rhythm implies a complementary myth: the idea that the white race is innately predisposed to financial genius. Koltay senses in racial explanations a convenient justification for an iniquitous status quo. In the maelstrom of American race politics, these are useful legposts.

Koltay is not a comforting read. His writing stems from a period when the richest nation in the world was losing a war and heated domestic and international rivalry. Koltay is talking about the newest, most challenging art of this century. His account of the compromised position of most music criticism — collusion with record companies, advertisers and promoters — will make any professional music writer wince. One of Koltay's adages is that he has a moral obligation to the musicians who play free jazz, and this unflinching idea of music as truth comes as a shock. A good one.

Koltay's explanation of the failure of bebop to find its target audience is telling. Discarding the universalist concepts — genius, mass stupidity — that prevent analysts grasping historical specifics, he instead engages artist and audience in their lived situation. He shows how clichés about the misunderstood artist are actually apologies for the wrong people being in charge. His account of the treatment meted out to Eric Dolphy is heart-breaking.

Fending off snobish assumptions about advanced art being the preserve of the elite, Koltay blames the failure of the 60s jazz

Coltrane, London, 1961



revolution on Coltrane's death in 1967 on the end of the struggle over the Vietnam War on a receding civil rights movement and the fact that the leadership of the music — Bill Dixon, Archie Shepp, Richard Davis, Jackie McLean — left New York for academia. Kolb is not so much blaming individual apathy as he is blaming the system as being as desecrating a social process.

Anyone who runs around in this way will cause offence. However, Kolb's refusal to engage the usual hype and idolization at least begins a realistic discussion about historical possibility, about what happened, about what might happen again. His treatments of Coltrane and Malcolm X learn from Trotsky about the decisive importance of leadership in social struggle.

Kolb's musical argument is riven with an unresolved paradox: He celebrates the way African culture integrates art and life, but then claims it is undesirable for jazz artists to perform in nightclubs. He abuses engineer Rudy Van Gelder for asking Coltrane to start again because his recording levels were away. Do we really want our music presented with the stentorian formality of the concert hall?

Jazz's difficult negotiation between everyday life and significance is surely part of its vitality.

The separation between art and politics is a fundamental tenet of conservatism. Kolb concludes with a magnificent exposition of the internationalist perspective that led Malcolm X to break from Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam. Malcolm X showed how jazz's sensual presentation of ideas can relate to political principles. The improving musician, he said, has shown that he can come up with something that nobody ever thought of on his own. And so can the downtrodden and the oppressed. The black person can also "come up with a philosophy that nobody has heard of yet. He can invent a society, a social system, an economic system, a political system that is different from anything that exists or has ever existed anywhere on this earth. He will improve; he'll bring it from within himself. And this is what you and I want."

Musical improvisation as a blueprint for political transformation? Kolb's links between Coltrane and Malcolm X make electric reading.

BECK WATSON

Vocal Authority: Singing Style And Ideology

By Jonas Potter

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS's WEB 1.4

As a scholarly middle-class choirboy, John Potter was seduced by the devil's music and under the spell of Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters formed an R&B group. Later, thoroughly trained in classical singing techniques, he was a founding member of Electric Phoenix and Red Bird — two of the

Voices of authority: Frankie

more adventurous vocal groups to have emerged in recent decades. Currently, he is a member of the highly visible Willard Ensemble, which has secured popular approval as well as critical acclaim.

From the plurality of his vocal experiences, Potter would seem to be ideally placed to conduct an investigation into the intriguing issues arising from a singer's choice of style. *Vocal Authority* sets out to locate the development of classical technique within the varied history of vocal articulation, and to interrogate the political implications of the dominance of that technique within Western cultures.

The profile outlines Potter's personal involvement with these questions; additionally, some of the more illuminating later passages arise from passing remarks grounded in his own practical experience. Overall, however, the study is caught up in an ultimately debilitating paradox: the book began as a doctoral thesis, and the published version is steeped in the trappings of institutional methodology far removed from personal experience. So as Potter sets about mapping oppositional positions from which to challenge the hegemony of classical training, his own writing style is laden with the weight of authority, conforming to an academic orthodoxy which requires that an account of rap be underpinned with a reference to Mikhail Bakhtin.

His dilemma is not diminished by poor back-up from his editors: it may be pedantic to mention that Keith Emerson, Bo Diddley, and David Bykes are all misspelled here, but more perniciously, an alert editor would have remarked that the penultimate chapter "Singing And Social Processes," could have been more usefully shunted to the front of the book. It makes explicit some of Potter's key theoretical positions, whereas in the published order the broad contours of his argument are rarely signposted clearly.

Following the engaging prologue, the opening chapter is disappointingly speculative and tentative as it plunges into the ancient world and the prehistory of singing. Taking the long historical view leads to dilution. The book sketches stylistic developments through the European Middle Ages, and the Renaissance to the contemporary avant garde. Though the survey is necessarily partial, it's nevertheless difficult to escape the feeling that Potter is following a line through a complex field of cultural forms that conveniently foregrounds his case, while mostly concealing those forms that might undermine it.

That said, the long view is required by the evolutionary model to which he subscribes. Singing styles are viewed as organisms which develop, reach a peak, stagnate, and then enter a period of decadence, during which some form of mutation is necessary to inject new life. So jazz singing, for Potter, reached its apogee with Sinatra, and then the excitement of rock 'n' roll had to compensate for Dean Martin and Perry Como.

It is surely another cauldroning paradox that

the model for his analysis draws much of its authority from the same 19th-century scientism that he contends when it surfaces in musical education. Assuming a scientific character, he argues, classical vocal training lent itself to the formation of a cultural elite. The pre-eminence of such training is the villain of the piece, adored and abetted by Received Pronunciation.

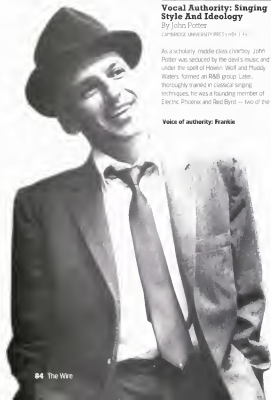
Potter values extended vocal techniques as a means of overcoming the restrictions of classical style. Then how come he refers to Stockhausen's *Sonnenrausch*, and enthusiasts over Berio's work, while failing to mention the important work of Kirk Hurok, Shelley Hirsch, Bob Cobbing, David Moss, Greetje Biersma, Phil Minion, Carlos Santos, and numerous others? Joan LaBarbara merits brief mention. Meredith Monk is glimpsed at the very end.

As a new mode of vocal performance, rap is granted more attention. Its energetic formative years produced some "very specific meanings," some now notorious, others deeply offensive in some quarters. Yet rap's flourishing styles ought to confirm its vast potential for multiple meanings. Potter equates such plurality of significance with musical health, when a genre falls into a state of decadence, the meanings it makes available to listeners are at once diminished and more predictable: is the production of cultural meaning really such a neat procedure anyway? The image of the plant that grows, bears fruit, and then withers underlies Potter's conception of the process.

In an oblique way, *Vocal Authority* may actually prove Potter's point. His own education has clearly left him with a disapproving sense of the cultural dominance of the classical paradigm. To others, the point of view may seem unrealistically monolithic. Here it helps to compare his argument to that of another musician who similarly objects to the dominance of written authority, but with a notably different musical background. Derek Bailey, in *Improvisation: Its Nature And Practice In Music* (1980), avoids simple binary decisions between improvisation and composition. Rather, he elucidates the plurality of improvisatory practice, while deposing the notion of composed music as dominant — it's just one strand among many.

Perhaps because of his underlying "organic" orientation, Potter doesn't really address the issues raised by the technologies (eg microphones, amplifiers, PA systems) that helped shape contemporary vocal technique. If he had done so, he might well have found that the stylistic pluralism he so desires is more firmly established in our lives than he imagines. His preface identifies his book as "a kind of work-in-progress written against a background of continuing experience." But for his work to progress, Potter needs to find a more direct way of addressing the compelling issues that are here constructed under an institutional straitjacket.

JULIAN COWLEY



new notes at a glance

information from spnm

new notes, the monthly magazine published by spnm, is an essential guide to what's happening in new music. Events listed in full in **new notes** are summarised on this page. On 8 June spnm presents the London debut of *Agutza* at the Spitalfields Festival in an showcase of the best of the new in British today. Why not join us? To find out more: 0171 628 9666 F 0171 931 9325 E spnm@spnm.org.uk or visit our web site

1 Stephen Oliver Prize winning opera

*Home**** Benjamin***
Culverton Theatre, Southwark
Rus, London W1 0171 420 0171

Mrs O's Saturday Nights

Great Stage, Mirror Street, London
W1 0171 420 0171

2 Mrs O's Saturday Nights

Great Stage, Mirror Street, London
W1 0171 420 0171

Mini Opera

*Nicolson****
Jewellery Centre, Gaudin Ave
London W1 0171 420 0171

The Kings Singers & Evelyn Glennie

Marford, Simon, Kitzow, Gordon, Van Dyk, Home, Glaser/Kelcey
R11

Hummel Series - Concert 2

Talentsau, Hummel/Rose***
Adams, Weber
J55

Mrs O's Saturday Nights

*Nicolson****
Great Stage, Mirror Street, London
W1 0171 420 0171

3-24 Spitalfields Festival

many new works***
Christ Church, Commercial Street
London E1 0171 377 1362

4 Inventing America

*Barber, Proven****
R11

5 RCM Composers' Concert

programme to be announced
RCM, Prince Consort Road,
London SW7 0171 589 3663

BBC SO & BBC Singers

Boels, Dallapozola
Maida Vale Studios, Deodar Rd
London W1 0171 703 2149

6 Apartment House & Michael Parsons

*Lücher, Cage, White, Skempton, Parsons**** Wolff
Kettle's Yard, Castle Street
Cambridge CB2 01223 352124

7 Music of Today

Sallinen
R11

* 8 spnm Showcase with Vaganza

*Anderson**** Kagi, McEwen***
Harvey, Varese, Sidwell***
Craken
Christ Church, Commercial Street
London E1 0171 377 1362

9 Michael Berkeley 50th Birthday

Berkeley, Brahms, Mozart
R11

University of Birmingham New Music Ensemble

*Ives, Howard**** Bland***
Feldman, Anderson***
Dowling*** Bantok
Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Lawrie
Hall, Birmingham B15

10 Double Bass 1: International

Bello, Skjold*** Phamster,
Wickham*** Lombard***,
Card*** Fukashtina***,
Kerzica
C11 0171 362 8032

11 New Ensemble

Olbert, Vine, Lewis
R11/MT 124 Oxford Road,
Manchester M13 0161 271 6283

12 'Four Sonatas'

*Whetnam****
R11

13 New choral music

Stanford, Keeling, Ravel
Holst, Berger, Malton, Haydn
Smalton/McEwen, Southwark
NC21 01688 813890

14 Apartment House

*Lücher**** Cage,
Skempton, Parsons***, Wolff,
White, Sherr*** Goode,
Polarsky***, Johnson
C11 0171 362 8034

Sinfonia 21

Matthews, Haydn, Britten,
Harvey
Imperial College, Exhibition Road
W1 0171 931 9325

14 The Byzantine Legacy

Tavener, Moody, Hatzis,
Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky,
music from the Bulgarians,
Romanian, Serbian and
Ukrainian traditions
Greek Orthodox Cathedral of
St Sophia, Mirror Street, London
W1 0171 285 3944

15 Orchestra of Colours

Antonaki, Christou,
Hadjilakos
Q11

18 Julian Jacobson, piano

Berg, Rindgen, Mozart, Beethoven,
Keeley, Patterson, Jacobson
R11

19 Composers Ensemble

Boswell, Feldman, Dornatori,
Woolrich, Katsalos,
Koumoundakis, Taylor
C11

Kokoro

Reich, Marland, Nyman,
K. Tippett***, Torkes, Bryars,
Adams
The Arts, Church Hill,
Basingstoke RG21 01253 84424

20 Leicester

International Music Festival
Bach, Woolrich, Mendelssohn
New Walk Museum, 52 New Walk
Leicester LE1 0116 255 4854

21 Free - an anti-Requiem

Ely, van Rijn, Vath-Gutro
Cross, Murphy, Lane,
Thompson
Manning Hall, University of
London Union, Mole Street
London WC1 0171 277 3814

Fresh Organ

Arnold-Forster, Bowler***
Synchrophone, Morrison/Gupte,
Powell, Ayres, Russell,
Hawkins, McBride, Pyke,
Thompson
St James' Church, Square Garden
London SE1 0181 938 1204

22 The London Chamber Group

*Melvin**** Skempton, Bailey,
Gardner, Petti-Evans
van Dam*** Moss*** Wolff,
Cutter*** Edwards***
C11 0171 274 8151

23 Camarade

*Alwyn, Keene, Knight,
Mozart, Niggle**** Read***
R11

25 RCM Symphony Orchestra

Tippett, Beethoven, R Strauss
RCM, Prince Consort Road
London SW7 0171 589 3663

Julian Jacobson, piano

Harvey, Krussner, Berkeley,
Montague, Anderson, Lust
R11

The Labyrinth

Localite, Heron, Fitzroy,
Hakem*** Bach
R11

27 The London 20

*Walcott**** McCabe,
Bryars, Debussy
St Clement's Church, Gloucester St
London NW1 0161 670 5859

Brunel Ensemble

Debussy, R.R. Bennett, Bartok
Talbot, Woodrich
C11

28 Royal Leamington Spa Bach Choir

Brahms, McDowell, Off
You're over, Royal Leamington Spa
01926 114418

Music of Today

Glenn
R11

29 Soweto String Quartet

Britten Sinfonia
Lives, Carter, Keene***,
Copland
Prestonburgh Cathedral
0171 452336

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CB: Cauxway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1
JSS: St John's, Smith Square, London
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RFH, QEH, PR: South Bank
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epiphanies

Tim Owen asks himself whether the pleasures of live harmolodics can compensate for being ejected from the brotherhood of Heavy Metal

From the age of 12, I threw myself into a fortnightly ritual of attendance at the Birmingham Odeon, a primary node on the burgeoning Heavy Metal circuit. These events were pantomimic conversations with attendant dress codes, social hierarchies and laws of etiquette, all serving to reinforce a stringent code of values which fed back into and was reflected in the music enacted on stage. If any group optimised the raw power of Heavy Metal and its capacity for empowering an Odeon full of burn-tufted denim youths, it had to be Led Zeppelin. And because it soon became apparent that nothing else in the genre could ever prove as powerful or as affecting as Zeppelin in the raw, living flesh, the enthusiasm for live music they infused me with led me to check out folk and blues, and on into jazz, in an attempt to relive the

experience. For whatever the musical style, even if they touched me only tangentially, I'd already concluded that live performances invariably transcended their recorded forms. But concertgoing was not without its risks. Popular music's propensity for fragmenting into tribes, some more warlike than others, lent either a sense of tension or terror to the music event. After I was assaulted at a Blue Oyster Cult gig for sporting a Strangers badge, I began to loathe the inward-looking nature of tribal youth culture.

Even so, in the dog days of the 80s, I still tried to hear it all, though from the marginally safer retreat of working in a record shop rather than in the frontline at a concert. Jazz records came to represent a compelling challenge, a form for which no sector of the media or music industry provided any apposite frame of reference, which apparently operated according to its own arcane dictates.

And so, armed with prior knowledge of a mere clutch of "jazz classics", I finally ventured out into this whole new world of live music, beginning with a Camden Jazz Festival appearance by Ornette Coleman at London's Town And Country Club. This turned out to be my ideal music venue: I loved being there even before the music began. The sense of event was familiar from those Odeon rituals, but the sense of Danish belonging was replaced by one of coming together, an air of collective individualism. The gathering that night was charged with expectation. Opening for Ornette Coleman was Wayne Shorter. I'd never really liked Weather Report records, but his set knocked me out. This, his Phishion Navigator-era group, was my first exposure to the whole jazz funk, harmolodic, post-bitches Brew vortex, and through the medium of Shorter's set, it changed my accumulated preconceptions about what I valued in music. Or it would have, if Ornette Coleman's Prime Time hadn't ridden in from the wings on Wayne's coat tails and stolen the show. Some people say that harmolodics is a difficult concept, but because I've seldom had such a direct experiential revelation, I tend to think it's just ecstatic. And since when has anyone had good reason to be frightened of ecstasism?

What made that show so special? Well, of course, I'd never heard anything like it. Coleman's music wasn't available on disc at the time, and in *All Languages* and *Virgin Beauty* were still to be released. I'd heard Song X, the collaboration with Pat Metheny, but at that point it was still too outside my experience, not to mention a

little opaque. But live, Prime Time was viscerally affecting. Of course Heavy Metal had accustomed me to volume, but this kind of density and polyphony was something else altogether. And I loved the way Coleman looked. I hadn't seen anyone carry a suit in primary colours so well since my last George Melly show. Coleman may not have Melly's wit or ready stage manner, but he had dignity, and an implacable presence that certainly put the onstage antics of The Scorpions and their ilk in a new perspective. The instrumentation was fascinating, my rocker's mindset had no mental template with which to match the sounds being generated and the musicians on stage.

A decade later the hope for a comparable experience to Coleman at the Town And Country has waned. Although I've been to some fine concerts in the interim, Prime Time roused my musical preconceptions wide open. But of course it's foolish of me even to expect to be so vividly ravaged by a single event ever again. For here in the adult world of music, the majority of venues are terrible, as are the majority of audiences, and everything about them works against a true communion between musicians and listeners, at least of the kind lent at a Metal show. The point is illustrated by the differences accentuated in seeing the same group in two different locations — the first time at the 'Rock' venue Town And Country, and second time round at the very adult South Bank Centre. I saw Prime Time and The Bill Frisell Band at both — and you don't have to be Margaret Mead to work out that the audiences for each gig were radically different, though the groups were the same.

Different venues reflect divergent, self-willed social demographics, which in turn restrict the limited ambient possibilities of the events staged there, and each architecture has latent properties as marked as its acoustics. Bohemian iconoclasts are drawn to urban festivals; and metropolitan sophisticos to arts centres, much as provincial lads are drawn to their local arenas. An audience which applauds dissonance in one venue will walk out at another. Most jazz venues, for example, are designed for aspirational middle-agers to dine out on street cred. Either that, or they are characterised by the same kind of inverted snobbery and harshist conservatism that rules in traditional folk clubs. Meanwhile, promoters who run concerts at arts centres such as London's South Bank, line venues in their own right, risk associating their events with the stigma of high culture; only arty types will attend.

The audience that convened for Prime Time's show at the Town And Country has not, I'm certain, come together under the same roof since. Those who follow music with an open ear now will more likely end up in small numbers at ill-advertised gigs at scattered venues, in the company of the similarly curious, the aspirational, and the disaffected. They won't feel any inflated sense of tribal belonging. Their reward might be an entirely new experience that opens a new route to a greater love and understanding of music, but there's unlikely to be any sense of communion, nor any sense of continuum. Unlike Heavy Metal, jazz ends up as a solitary joy. □

Ornette in his prime



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